

CHAPTER 22

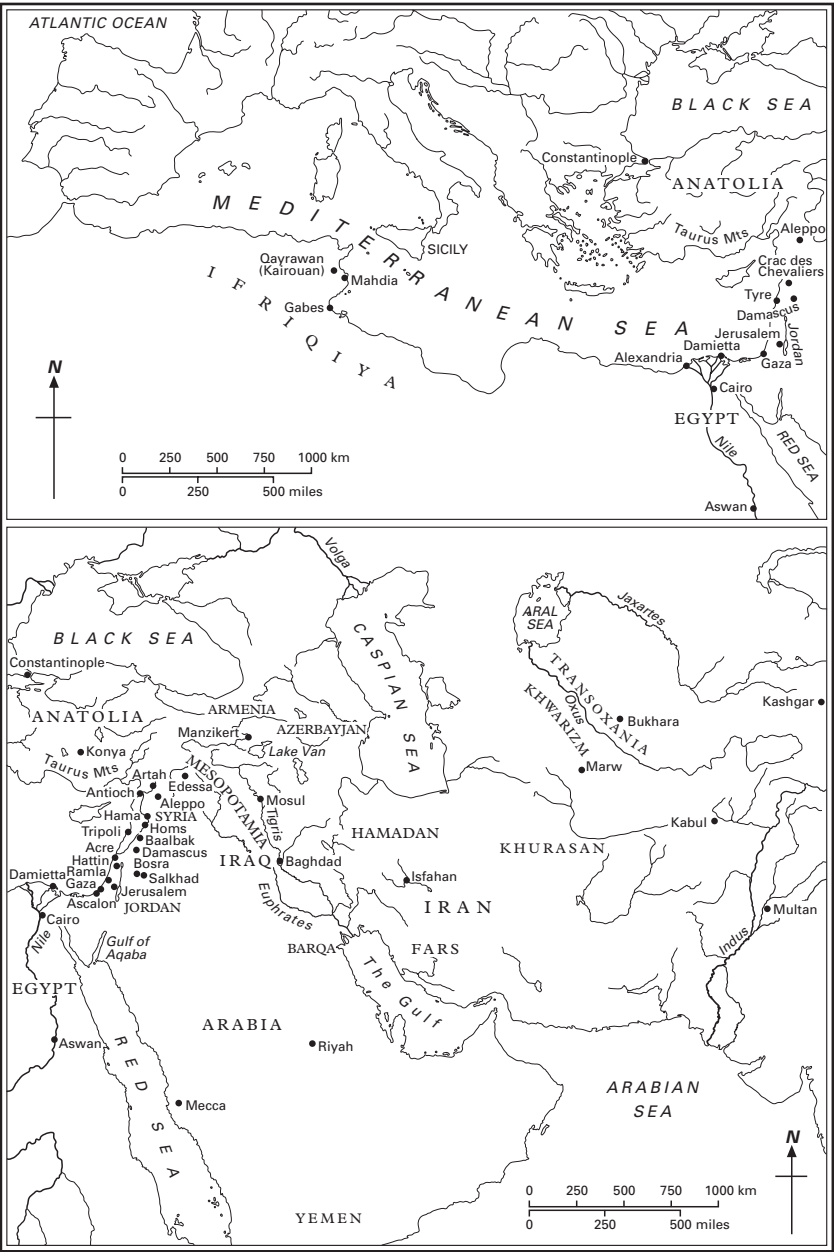
‘ABBASIDS, FATIMIDS AND SELJUQS

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THE FATIMID EMPIRE

In the year 1000, in the midst of the so-called Shi‘ite century of Islam, the Sevenser Shi‘ite imam and caliph al-Hakim bi amr Allah, ‘He Who Rules in Accordance with God’s Command’, had his tutor and regent, the white eunuch Barjawan, assassinated in the royal palace city of al-Qahira, ‘the Victorious’, from which Cairo takes its name. From then until his disappearance in 1021, he presided over an empire intended to restore the religious and political unity of the Muslim community under its true leaders, the descendants of Muhammad, of his cousin and chosen successor ‘Ali, and his daughter Fatima, divinely appointed to the imamate or supreme authority for the faith, and destined to the caliphate or lieutenantancy of God and His Prophet as commanders of the faithful. In the course of the tenth century, his Fatimid dynasty had risen to power, first in North Africa and then in Egypt and Syria, while the original Arab empire under the older ‘Abbasid dynasty of caliphs had finally disintegrated under the weight of its own excessive taxation.¹ The ‘Abbasids themselves had survived at Baghdad, but as the purely nominal rulers of the Muslim world, traditionally recognized but no longer obeyed by the independent princes of their former provinces. At Baghdad itself, moreover, they were under the protection of the Buyid or Buwayhid dynasty of western Iran and Iraq. Like the Fatimids, the Buyids were also Shi‘ites or partisans of the fourth caliph ‘Ali, in preference to the ‘Abbasids who claimed descent from the Prophet’s uncle. They did not therefore recognize the Fatimids as true heirs to the empire of the faith, but rather the Hidden Imam of the Twelver Shi‘ites, who had vanished into *ghayba* or supernatural occlusion in 874. Together with the Fatimids, the Buyids nevertheless ensured that the heartlands of the Islamic world in the Near and Middle East were ruled by monarchs whose political and religious

¹ See Kennedy (1986), pp. 187–99.



Map 18 Fatimids, Seljuqs, Zengids and Ayyubids

authority had wholly or partially superseded that of the previous sovereigns of Islam.

Despite this Shi‘ite supremacy, the Shi‘ite victory was precarious. Shi‘ism itself had barely emerged as a religious doctrine out of widespread political loyalty to the ‘Alids or ‘Alawis, the descendants of ‘Ali who laid claim to rule as the Prophet’s closest kin. In so far as it had done so, it was riven by the disagreement of the Seveners and the Twelvers over the identity of the imam whose religious authority was central to their faith. The Fatimids’ impressive rise from revolution to empire had convinced a variety of Shi‘ites right across the Islamic world of the truth of their claim to the imamate in line of descent from ‘Ali’s younger son Husayn, through the figure of Muhammad ibn Isma‘il, the Seventh Imam with whom the line had passed into *satr* or concealment at the end of the eighth century, before its reappearance in the person of the Fatimid mahdi in North Africa in 910.² But this claim was disputed by the Twelvers, who did not recognize the imamate of Muhammad ibn Isma‘il, and by many ‘Alids who challenged the whole of the Fatimid genealogy. While Shi‘ites thus divided their loyalties between alternative, even multiple claimants to the authority of God on earth,³ their opponents not only included established monarchs threatened by the principle of ‘Alid rule, beginning with the ‘Abbasids but extended to dynasties on the periphery of the Islamic world, most notably the Umayyads in Spain and the Ghaznavids in eastern Iran. The majority of the men of religion objected less to Shi‘ite claims to power than to Shi‘ite claims to authority over the Shari‘a or Islamic Law. Whereas most jurists claimed to follow the Sunna or exemplary custom of the Prophet as preserved by the collective scholarship of successive generations of students and teachers, Shi‘ites had come to regard their chosen imam as the sole guarantor of the authenticity of this Prophetic tradition from generation to generation. When, as in the case of the Fatimids, the chosen imam who laid down the Law was also the monarch who enforced it, the conflict between Shi‘ites and the Sunni majority, who relegated the ruler to the executive arm of the Law, was not only doctrinal but political.⁴ It was made all the more acute by the Mahdism of the Fatimids, by their belief in their messianic mission to revive the faith after its lapse into ignorance on the part of the faithful, which had brought their dynasty to power in North Africa and Egypt. The Buyids, who laid no claim to religious authority themselves, were more modest, seeking only a niche for themselves as barbarian intruders upon the imperial Arab scene. The lines of battle were nevertheless sharply drawn; and despite the political success of Shi‘ism, the obstacles to its

² See Brett (1994a).

³ See, for Twelver Shi‘ism, Momen (1985), and for Sevenser Shi‘ism, Daftary (1990).

⁴ For the relationship between government and the Law in Sunni jurisprudence, and the distinctive difference from Shi‘ism, see Coulson (1964), ch. 9, pp. 120–34 and pp. 106–7.

further empire building were formidable, and in the end, insuperable. Hakim himself was to prove the point.

By the time he came to power any aspiration the Fatimids may have had to reconstitute the old Arab empire by conquest had been effectively abandoned, as the dynasty settled firmly into the pattern of states created by the break-up of the 'Abbasid empire in the tenth century. Their state in Egypt and Syria was none other than the empire of the Ikhshidids, who had carved it out of the 'Abbasid dominions in the 930s and 40s; and it suffered the same limitations. During the reign of Hakim's father 'Aziz, 975–96, the North African territories of the dynasty in Ifriqiya, that is, Tunisia with eastern Algeria and Tripolitania, had become a hereditary monarchy under their Zirid viceroys, who ruled in the name of the caliph but no longer at his command. The failure of the dynasty to retain control of its original base for the conquest of Egypt in 969 was matched by the difficulty of annexing Syria, the necessary base for any advance into Iraq to eradicate the 'Abbasids and their authority entirely. By the death of 'Aziz in 996, the Fatimids were in control of the former Ikhshidid province of southern and central Syria from a capital at Damascus, but Aleppo under the Hamdanids had eluded them, not least because its independence was championed by Byzantium, which feared for its hold on Antioch, captured in 969 as the Fatimids marched triumphantly into the Nile valley. 'Aziz had died in the midst of hostilities between the two empires, which had allowed him to pose as the champion of Islam in the holy war upon the infidel, but little more.⁵ The Syrian desert, meanwhile, was in the hands of three large, and militant, tribal Arab groups – the Kilab in the north, the Kalb in the centre and the Tayy in the south – which had threatened the security of the country for the past century. During the thirty years that had elapsed since their arrival in Egypt, the inability of the Fatimids to alter the political pattern of the Muslim world by force of arms was only matched by their inability to overcome the religious divisions of the community by persecution or persuasion. Out of the general revolutionary atmosphere at the beginning of the tenth century, the *da'wa* or call of the dynasty had condensed its respondents into a sectarian minority of Isma'ilis, whose revolutionary appeal was either limited or localized. Despite their high profile, the popularity of the 'Alid cause and the widespread Shi'ite sympathies of Iraq and Syria, which favoured their recognition as caliphs in the Friday prayer, the Fatimids had no mass following of believers to advance their claim to speak for Islam as a whole, or to promote their imperial cause. The empire over which Hakim ruled was thus of a different kind from that which the 'Abbasids had lost.

⁵ When Basil II unexpectedly invaded Syria in 995 to relieve the Fatimid siege of Aleppo, 'Aziz had summoned the faithful to the holy war, but sat in camp for weeks outside Cairo until the emperor withdrew at the end of the season: Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, I, pp. 287–8.

It was an empire which continued to be predicated upon the divine mission of the Fatimid imamate to bring the whole of Islam into its fold. The fold in question embraced the state or Dawla proper in Egypt and Syria, where the Fatimid imam ruled as well as reigned in the capacity of caliph or deputy of God on earth, and what might be termed the Dawla by courtesy, where he reigned but did not rule. The chief example of such a state was that of Ifriqiya under the Zirids, together with Sicily under the Kalbids and the Hijaz, the Holy Places, of which the Fatimid caliph was the protector as well as the supplier with grain. Despite the failure of ‘Aziz to take Aleppo in 995, the city with its mainly Shi‘ite population became a Fatimid dependency in 1002, when the Hamdanids were dispossessed by their army commander Lu’ lu’, who was succeeded in 1008 by his son Marwan. Outside the fold, meanwhile, was what might be termed the Dawla Irredenta, the rest of the Muslim world, where the imam–caliph neither ruled nor reigned, but which he would have to redeem in God’s good time if the mission of the dynasty were to be accomplished. Here, therefore, conquest was never excluded, but diplomacy was more characteristically employed to win friendship and possible recognition from dynasties such as the Kurdish Marwanids of Mayyafariqin in the hill country of the upper Tigris, and the Arab bedouin ‘Uqaylids of northern Iraq. Behind the diplomacy lay the propaganda, systematically put out to maintain the cause of the dynasty and promote local revolutions, whether by violence or persuasion, which would draw the states in question, under a pro-Fatimid prince, into the inner circle of the Dawla by courtesy. The propaganda was directed on the one hand at the Isma‘ili faithful, stretching across the Islamic world as far as India and central Asia, to encourage their missionary activity, and on the other hand at princes like the Buyids, who might be willing to convert. The great achievement of Hakim’s reign was to develop this propaganda from the personal task of the imam in Ifriqiya, followed by that of the chief *qadi* in Egypt, into the work of a college responsible for the teaching and training of *du‘at* (sing. *da‘i*), ‘missionaries’ under the direction of a chief *da‘i*.⁶ At the same time, this teaching provoked the greatest controversy of the reign.

THE REIGN OF HAKIM AND ITS OUTCOME

For the reign was nothing if not controversial. When Hakim so ruthlessly took power, he did so with one eye upon his imperial mission, and the other on the servants of his household, his secretariat and his army, which had quarrelled over the regency during his minority, and threatened to rule in his name. The threat was symptomatic of the evolution of the Fatimid regime from the ‘patriarchal’,

⁶ See Assaad (1974).

household government of the dynasty in Ifriqiya to the grander 'patrimonial' style of the caliphate in Egypt, to borrow Weber's terms. The Fatimids in fact provided Weber with important examples of the 'routinization of charisma' on the one hand, whereby the monarch's God-given right to rule became institutionalized, and 'patrimonialism' on the other, whereby the monarch's authority was delegated to his servants, to the detriment of his ability to rule.⁷ The evolution of such a regime in Egypt was theatrical, governed by the need to emulate all rivals with a show of power and authority in the manner of the time. It centred therefore on the great new palace city of al-Qahira outside the civilian metropolis of Fustat, where government was conducted with all due pomp and ceremony.⁸ That government rested upon the fiscal bureaucracy of Egypt, whose largely Coptic Christian personnel supplied the secretarial skills required throughout the administration. Increasingly, however, the Copts were joined by secretarial families from Iraq in search of employment after the collapse of the 'Abbasid Dawla,⁹ and by Jews, one of whom, the convert Ya'qub ibn Killis, had become the first Fatimid wazir, the servant who 'lifted the burden' of government from the shoulders of the sovereign.¹⁰ His appointment by 'Aziz was a significant step away from the personal control of the administration by the caliph in Ifriqiya, towards government by an army of clerks distinct from the royal household, directed by a minister rather than the monarch. Meanwhile, the single most important task of that clerical army was to pay the army proper, which in the course of the warfare in Syria had grown from a corps of Berber cavalry into a composite force of Turkish as well as Berber cavalry, and black Sudanese and Daylami (that is, Iranian) infantrymen, together with white slave guardsmen in the palace itself. Jealousy of the Turkish Mashariqa or easterners by the Kutama Berber Maghariba or westerners, who had brought the Fatimids to power in North Africa and been rewarded with the title of *awliya* or friends of the dynasty, lay behind the struggle for power during the minority of Hakim, when the Kutama had been defeated in their attempt to monopolize the government. When Hakim disposed of his regent Barjawan, he took in hand this burgeoning army of secretaries and soldiers.

How he did so is obscured by his reputation for madness. His madness rests upon the opinion of his physician, reported by the Christian chronicler Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Antaki,¹¹ and the evidence of his many cruelties and apparent eccentricities.¹² The black legend of the monster is expounded with relish by

⁷ See Turner (1974), pp. 75–92.

⁸ For al-Qahira and its ceremonies, see Lane-Poole (1906), pp. 118–34; Raymond (1993), pp. 53–65; Canard (1951, repr. 1973), and (1952, repr. 1973); Sanders (1989) and (1994).

⁹ See Ashtor (1972), repr. (1978). ¹⁰ See Lev (1981).

¹¹ See Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Antaki, 'The Byzantine-Arab Chronicle'.

¹² For the list, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1954–), s.v. 'al-Hakim bi-amr Allah', art. Canard.

Lane-Poole.¹³ But a clinical diagnosis of madness cannot be accepted at this distance in time and the symptomatic evidence is quite unclear. Attempts to explain his actions have identified him as a man of sound political and economic sense, who either believed or disbelieved in his theocratic role.¹⁴ Alternatively his more peculiar acts and excesses have been considered to have been those of a madman and his insanity has been treated as an aggravating influence upon essentially rational behaviour.¹⁵ Bianquis presents him as a frightened tyrant, executing his wazirs on the least suspicion, and perpetually afraid of the *wasita* or ‘middleman’, the representative of the military who from time to time was entrusted with the duties of wazir.¹⁶ But there was evidently also a religious dimension to the reign, in which Hakim appears in the role of the ideal ruler. Unfolding in three stages out of the dynasty’s doctrine of the imamate, this dimension allows his policies to be periodized and thus rationalized without recourse to psychology.

Some features remained constant, beginning with the edicts which eventually prohibited, not only wine and beer, but nakedness in bathhouses, women leaving the house and idle amusements including chess, together with the biblical shellfish and fish without scales, and less obviously, the vegetable *mulukhiyya*; dogs were to be killed. So too were officials accused of corruption, beginning almost immediately with the *muhtasib* or inspector of markets Ibn Abi Najda, and extending to the chief *qadi* Husayn.¹⁷ Since the use of office for personal enrichment was systematic and ineradicable,¹⁸ the entire army of office holders fell under suspicion, and succumbed throughout the reign to executions and mutilations motivated either by the caliph’s zeal for justice or fear of his servants. Among the victims were the descendants of the principal officers of Hakim’s grandfather, the great Mu‘izz li-Din Allah, who had brought the dynasty in from the periphery of the Muslim world in Ifriqiya to its centre at Cairo: on the one hand the *qadi* al-Nu‘man, the canonical exponent of the doctrine of the imamate,¹⁹ and on the other Jawhar al-Siqlabi, the conqueror of Egypt in 969. Great families of jurists and generals, the aristocracy of the regime, their sons and grandsons, had been put to death by the middle of the reign. Wazirs like the Christian Fahd ibn Ibrahim lost their lives; other aspirants to office survived precariously, like the Iraqi al-Jarjara’i, whose hands

¹³ Lane-Poole (1914), pp. 123–34. The account of al-Maqrizi, *Khitat*, is extensively translated by Lewis (1974), I, pp. 46–59.

¹⁴ See Vatikiotis (1957); Shaban (1976), pp. 206–10. ¹⁵ See e.g. Bianquis (1978). ¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Al-Maqrizi, *Itti‘az* II, p. 59; al-Maqrizi’s chronicle, derived from lost contemporary sources largely through the late thirteenth-century writer Ibn Muyassar as well as non-Egyptian authors like Ibn al-Athir, is the principal source for the history of the dynasty.

¹⁸ See Bianquis (1992).

¹⁹ Most notably in al-Nu‘man, *Da‘a’im al-Islam*, or ‘Pillars of Islam’; see Poonawala (1977); Daftary (1990), pp. 249–53; Gottheil (1906).

were both cut off, but who lived to become a leading figure in government by the time of Hakim's disappearance in 1021. From this point of view, the regime conformed nicely to Weber's description of a patrimonial society 'characterised by rapid turnover and instability of personnel but great stability of social structures', under a ruler living by 'the fiction that he is benevolent and concerned for the welfare of his subjects', who looked to the monarch as the fount of justice.²⁰

The system, however, was not static. For the first seven years after his assumption of power, Hakim enforced the Fatimid doctrine of the imamate established by Mu'izz and the *qadi* al-Nu'man, ordering the cursing of Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman, the three predecessors of 'Ali in the caliphate, as usurpers, and insisting on Isma'ili forms of worship. It was a symbolic gesture, designed to hold up to respect the example of the true faith, rather than seeking to convert the whole of Islam to Fatimism by imposing a single comprehensive doctrine of the Shari'a upon the various schools of Law – a task far beyond the capacity of any government. As caliph or commander of the faithful, however, he upheld Islam as a whole by obliging Christians and Jews to wear distinctive dress, thus putting them conspicuously in their rightful place. These policies changed after the Mahdist rebellion of the pretender Abu Rakwa at the head of the bedouin of the western desert in 1005–6, an apocalyptic event which gave Hakim a God-sent trial and triumph. Discrimination against non-Muslims became active persecution, culminating in the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem during the years 1009–11. On the other hand, the cursing of 'Ali's predecessors was forbidden and Sunnis were placed on a par with Isma'ilis as good Muslims over whom the imam presided as the caliph or deputy of God on earth. The persecution of the Copts, which drove many into exile and others to convert to Islam, led once again into revolt, this time by the Tayy bedouin of Palestine in the name of the *sharif* of Mecca, who represented the lineage of 'Ali's elder son Hasan; and this second seven-year period ended with yet another change, when Hakim's nephew 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Ilyas was invested as Wali 'Ahd al-Muslimin, as heir to the throne but not the imamate. This separation of functions, emphasized by the designation of a nephew rather than a son, was against the whole principle of the dynasty, and it may be that Hakim had conceived of himself prophetically as the ninth and last imam in line from Muhammad ibn Isma'il, whose successors would be no more than leaders of the Muslim community.²¹ The final seven years of the reign, when Hakim took to the life of a reclusive ascetic, were certainly the most controversial. The persecution of Jews and Christians was reversed, but extremist Persian Isma'ilis, Hamza and al-Darazi, made their appearance

²⁰ Turner (1974), pp. 80–1.

²¹ See Makarem (1970).

to claim that Hakim was divine. Rioting against such blasphemy in Fustat led to the burning of much of the city. Hodgson has argued that Hakim approved of their preaching, Assaad that he did not, inviting the philosopher al-Kirmani to explain that the ways of the imam might be unaccountable, but were fully in accord with the doctrine of the dynasty.²² The fact remains that the sources for this period are defective, perhaps officially destroyed;²³ that Hakim mysteriously disappeared in the desert in 1021; and that the dynasty moved swiftly to install his son in place of his nephew under the significant title al-Zahir li-Iʿzaz Din Allah, 'He Who Appears Openly to Strengthen the Religion of God', a clear affirmation of the recognized doctrine of the imamate promulgated by Hakim's grandfather Muʿizz in the works of the *qadi* al-Nuʿman.

The result was twofold. The government at Cairo was assumed by a cabal of leading officers in alliance with the princesses who now controlled the palace: first Hakim's sister Sitt al-Mulk, and after her death the queen-mother Ruqiyya, until in 1027 the leader of the cabal, the immigrant Iraqi ʿAli ibn Ahmad al-Jarjaraʿi, became wazir. From then until his death in 1045, Jarjaraʿi al-Aqtaʿ, 'the Handless', who dictated his letters to a secretary, ruled as head of a party of clients in control of the army of secretaries and soldiers, the Men of the Pen and the Men of the Sword. This party became so deeply rooted that the wazir survived the death of Zahir in 1036, and the appearance of a powerful enemy in the shape of Rasad, mother to the new, infant Caliph Mustansir. In Syria Jarjaraʿi's ally, the Turkish general Anushtakin al-Dizbiri, defeated the Mirdasids, the bedouin Arabs of Kilab who had captured Aleppo in 1023, together with their ally Ibn Jarrah in command of the Tays of Transjordan, at the battle of Uqhuwana in northern Palestine in 1029, and went on to annex the city to the province of Damascus in 1038. In the course of protracted negotiations,²⁴ good relations were restored with Constantinople and confirmed by a treaty of 1036 or 1038; by 1048 the Byzantines had rebuilt the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem after permission was given by Hakim in his final years. Despite, and probably because of, the notoriously 'rapid turnover and instability of personnel' in the previous reign, the personnel in question had combined in this way to form a government whose members could enjoy the fruits of office without interruption by the monarch. The power and authority of the imam-caliph remained intact, but was effectively smothered by the collusion

²² Hodgson (1962); Assaad (1974).

²³ See Bianquis (1978). The departure from Egypt of the Christian author Yahya ibn Saʿid al-Antaki, which brought his chronicle of events in Egypt to an end in 1014, may have been coincidental, but seven years of the contemporary court chronicle of al-Musabbihi, the principal source for subsequent writers, were evidently missing from the copies at the disposal of subsequent generations.

²⁴ See Canard (1961).

of his servants, much as Hakim had feared. The result was a conservative regime content to consolidate the position of the dynasty in Egypt and Syria without enthusiasm for its manifest destiny in the world at large.

If the Dawla had fallen into the hands of ministers from outside the royal household and the adepts of the sect, the *da'wa* or missionary doctrine of the dynasty was nevertheless summed up in a grand synthesis which presented the Muslim world with a challenge it could not ignore. The doctrinal uncertainty which culminated in Hakim's acclamation as a divine being by Hamza and Darazi may have killed off a certain enthusiasm for Isma'ilism in evidence in Egypt at the beginning of the reign. In the end, however, it served to complete rather than destroy the doctrinal achievement of his ancestors.²⁵ The preaching of Hakim's divinity by the Iranian *du'at* was the final outburst under the Fatimids of that *ghuluww* or religious extremism which had entered into the origins of the dynasty as the eschatological expectation of the mahdi, the bringer of a final revelation.²⁶ At the death of Hakim, the followers of Hamza and Darazi were driven from Egypt to establish themselves, after twenty years of proselytism among Isma'ilis all over the eastern Islamic world, as the Druzes of Mount Lebanon and the Hawran, believing in the eternity of Hakim and his eventual return.²⁷ In Egypt itself, the religious establishment created by Hakim had already turned to the Iranian al-Kirmani to refute such dangerous delirium. Al-Kirmani did so not simply by reaffirming the divinely inspired appointment of the imam in succession to Muhammad as the supreme authority for the holy Law revealed in the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet. He brought about the final abandonment of the cabbalistic number mysticism common to *ghuluww* and earlier Fatimid writing,²⁸ and the final replacement of its myths of creation by a comprehensive Neoplatonic cosmology, in which the imam of the time represented the creative principle of the Active Intellect or Eternal Imam. Not only, therefore, was the imam the authority for the patent Revelation, the Zahir or Open doctrine of Islam; he was also the supreme authority for the Batin, the Hidden meaning of the Qur'an, now defined as the universe of Reason to which the imam was the only sure intellectual guide as keeper of God's Word. A vast *summum theologicum* was thereby offered to the Muslim world, in which the Fatimid imamate was cast in the role later proposed for itself by the thirteenth-century papacy. The Fatimid cause was equipped with a formidable intellectual case, maintained by the teachings of the Bab, the Door through which the imam spoke to the world, and promoted by Isma'ilis throughout Islam, irrespective of the domestic preoccupations of the regime.

²⁵ See Walker (1993). ²⁶ See Daftary (1990), pp. 64–5; Brett (1994a).

²⁷ See Daftary (1990), pp. 195–200; Hodgson (1962); Bryer (1975–6). ²⁸ See Halm (1978).

THE ‘ABBASID RESPONSE

Like the Fatimids, the Buyids had come to power in the tenth century on the strength of an army of mountain tribesmen, in their case from the region of Daylam to the south of the Caspian Sea. Like the Kutama of the mountains of Kabylia in eastern Algeria, the Daylamis were one of many such peoples embraced by the Arab conquests but largely independent of the Arabs, for whom Islam was either foreign or a weapon to be used against the conquerors. Drawn into the politics of the empire from the ninth century onwards, they were the principal agents of the Shi‘ite revolution of the tenth century which ushered in the century of Shi‘ite hegemony in the Near and Middle East. The Daylamis had a long history of support for militant ‘Alid pretenders to the throne; but the Buyids themselves were not ‘Alids. In origin they were freelance captains, who had established themselves in command of the southern Iranian province of Fars, the central Iranian province of Rayy and Isfahan, and finally central and southern Iraq. Unlike the Fatimids, therefore, they formed what Kennedy calls a family confederation centred upon Fars and its capital Shiraz, with no pretensions to caliphate or imamate, but rather to the old Persian title of *shahanshah*, ‘king of kings’. This claim to independence of existing political authority in Islam was nevertheless prudently reinforced by their patronage of Twelver Shi‘ism, whose Hidden Imam posed no threat to their power, but enabled them to keep their distance from the third source of their legitimacy, the ‘Abbasids, in whose name they ostensibly ruled as ‘Imad al-Dawla, Rukn al-Dawla, Mu‘izz al-Dawla, ‘Adud al-Dawla, etc., Pillars and Buttresses of the (‘Abbasid) State, as well as from the Fatimids with their pretensions to the sovereignty of the world. This was especially the case in Baghdad, where they were opposed by the Turkish militias who briefly expelled them from the city in 974, and by the ‘Abbasid caliphs, who identified themselves firmly with Sunnism in an attempt to regain a measure of independence. By the end of the tenth century, the religious factionalism they had encouraged in the population of Baghdad had grown to the point of entry into the wider world of Islam.²⁹

Despite the inevitable family quarrels over the succession at Rayy, Shiraz and Baghdad, the Buyid hold upon western Iran remained firm down to the middle years of the eleventh century. The Buyids of Rayy remained in close contact with their Daylami homeland to the north-west, to the extent of permitting the establishment of a related Daylami dynasty, the Kakuyids, at Hamadan, while relying for cavalry upon the Kurds of the Zagros to the west, under their Hasanuyid leaders. The Buyids of Shiraz were less happily dependent upon expatriate armies of Daylami infantry at odds with the squadrons of Turkish cavalry who had originally been recruited from central Asia by the ‘Abbasids

²⁹ See Kennedy (1986), pp. 212–36.

in the ninth century. These had since become a self-perpetuating caste of warriors raised from boys imported as slaves for training as *ghilman* (sing. *ghulam*), 'youths', in the warbands of their commanders.³⁰ The Buyid solution to the problem of paying such troops was the *iqta'* or apportionment, loosely rendered as 'fief', a grant of particular revenues to particular warriors or groups of warriors in return for their military service. In a highly centralized state such as Fatimid Egypt, this need be no more than an accounting device on the part of the Treasury to ensure the proper payment of the troops on parade;³¹ but where the fisc was less developed, as in Iran, the soldiers might be allowed to collect such revenues for themselves. Buyid practice came increasingly to involve such a devolution of authority, with all its dangers.³² Central government nevertheless remained largely in the hands of able wazirs, usually of Persian origin, who possessed the political as well as administrative skills to contain the quarrels of the dynasty and the military, and preside over a long period of comparative peace and prosperity, with local affairs in mainly local hands.³³ The rationale of such a state in the eyes of contemporaries was the *shawka* or thorn of the ruler, the terrible might of which the subject went in fear and dread about his lawful business;³⁴ or as the saying ascribed to the 'Abbasid Caliph Ma'mun went: 'The best life has he who has an ample house, a beautiful wife, and sufficient means, who does not know us and whom we do not know.'³⁵ The combination of royal courts, literate ministers and the revival of Persian in addition to Arabic meanwhile encouraged the proliferation of literatures and sciences that contributed to what Mez called 'the renaissance of Islam',³⁶ of which Iran in the Shi'ite century was the centre.

In the third Buyid realm of Iraq, following the death of the great 'Adud al-Dawla in 983, and the separation of the province from his seat of power in Fars, it was a different story. By the time the last of 'Adud al-Dawla's sons came to power at Shiraz in 998 with the title of Baha' al-Dawla, 'Splendour of the State', the bulk of Iraq was in the hands of the bedouin Arab 'Uqaylids to the north of Baghdad, the Mazyadids to the south, and the Kurdish 'Annazids to the east. These tribal dynasties had all arisen under Buyid patronage, and came to power through Buyid quarrels over the succession to 'Adud al-Dawla. Their dominions were not so much administrative units as tributary regions, whose cities, like Mosul, paid for their protection.³⁷ When Baha' al-Dawla moved to reoccupy Baghdad in 1002, he took over little more than the city

³⁰ See *ibid.*, pp. 206–11. ³¹ See Brett (1995a).

³² See Cahen (1953); *idem*, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1954–), s. v. 'Ikta'; Lambton (1965); Al-Duri (1969); Sato (1982).

³³ See Kennedy (1986), pp. 236–49. ³⁴ See Mottahedeh (1980), pp. 175–90.

³⁵ Quoted by Von Grunebaum (1955), p. 26. ³⁶ Mez (1937).

³⁷ See Kennedy (1986), pp. 210, 253–4, 292–302.

itself. The competent regime which he reinstated survived his death in 1012, but ended with the execution of his governor in 1016, leaving Baghdad a prey to communal violence: fighting between Shi‘ites and Sunnis merged into gang warfare and brigandage, which left great tracts of the city desolate. Crippled by poverty, the Buyid regime in the city was powerless; the Turks who upheld the rule of Shiraz, followed by that of the Buyid prince Jalal al-Dawla in Baghdad itself, represented yet another faction. Only the ‘Abbasids in their palace not merely survived but prospered as the champions of the Sunni cause, aided by the longevity as well as the ability of the two caliphs al-Qadir, 991–1031, and al-Qa‘im, 1031–75. The claims of the Fatimids, from which the Buyids had distanced themselves through their patronage of the doctrine of the Hidden Imam, were now exploited by the ‘Abbasids to win the support of the Twelver Shi‘ites of the city as well, through the denunciation of the Fatimids as impostors which was drawn up by the Shi‘ites of Baghdad and promulgated by al-Qadir in 1011.³⁸ This declaration that the Fatimids were not of ‘Alid descent touched a raw nerve, in that their genealogy was in fact far from clear, more a matter of faith than general knowledge;³⁹ and it prepared the way for a positive restatement of the ‘Abbasid position, which became a new and comprehensive theory of the caliphate. This was the work of the ‘Abbasid jurist and spokesman al-Mawardi (d. 1058), who composed his *Abkam al-sultaniyya* or Rules of Government for al-Qadir’s successor al-Qa‘im.

Al-Mawardi’s was a specifically Sunni theory of the caliphate, in that succession to the throne was declared to be by election of the community rather than by designation by the previous imam, as in Shi‘ism, and that the principal duty of the ruler was to enforce rather than authorize the Shari‘a. It was the first time that such a formula, implicit in the jurisprudence of the Sunni schools of Law, had been explicitly enunciated in the literature or explicitly accepted by the dynasty, with the qualification that the caliph now deputized for the Prophet in his capacity of ruler of the community, rather than God as ruler of the world. The Fatimids were left alone to maintain the original claim of the rulers of Islam to the caliphate of Allah.⁴⁰ As described by Mawardi, the offices of this caliphate were essentially those of the patrimonial state in the days of its glory in the eighth and ninth centuries, now sanctified as the ideal of government in accordance with the Law.⁴¹ The irony that the empire to be governed in this way had ceased to exist became instead the justification for the caliphate to exercise its authority rather than its power, pronouncing in favour of true as against false doctrine, and conferring legitimacy upon actual

³⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 241–2; Daftary (1990), pp. 109ff.

³⁹ See Mamour (1934); Brett (1994a). ⁴⁰ See Crone and Hinds (1986).

⁴¹ Most accessible in English in Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, I, pp. 448–65, II, pp. 3–73.

rulers by delegating its powers to them. This was little more than past practice, previously employed by the 'Abbasids to prevent the total disintegration of their empire, and subsequently by the Fatimids as a means of gaining an empire of their own, elevated into a principle of divinely instituted government. Nevertheless, it enabled the 'Abbasids convincingly to carry the ideological war back into the camp of their Fatimid enemies as well as their Buyid protectors. In the first half of the eleventh century, the universal caliphate may have been a fiction, but the fiction was potent, and portentous.⁴²

In the old dynastic stamping-ground of the Fertile Crescent, the 'Abbasids had been unable to keep Aleppo under the Hamdanids and Mirdasids from falling into the Fatimid orbit in Syria, but successfully prevented the 'Uqaylids of Iraq, for example, from changing their allegiance from Baghdad to Cairo in 1010. Away to the east of the Buyid dominions, on the other hand, al-Qadir found a powerful ally in Mahmud of Ghazna to the south of Kabul, who between 998 and his death in 1030 created a vast new empire in eastern Iran, from the Oxus and the Aral Sea to the Indian Ocean and the Indus, finally annexing the Buyid principality of Rayy in 1029. The son of a Turkish *ghulam* in the service of the Samanids of Bukhara, who had ruled the eastern Iranian world in the name of the 'Abbasids since the end of the ninth century, he took over the bulk of the Samanid dominions from his former masters in the name of al-Qadir, whose accession at Baghdad the Samanids had refused to recognize. Mahmud was duly rewarded with the titles of Wali Amir al-Mu'minin or Friend of the Commander of the Faithful, and Yamin al-Dawla wa Amin al-Milla, or Right Hand of the State and Keeper of the Community. Such titles reflected the thinking of Baghdad on the structure of its government in the absence of its empire: they represented a transposition of the office of wazir, the surrogate who 'lifted the burden' of power from the shoulders of the monarch,⁴³ from a prime minister to a prince whose *shawka* was his own. To Mahmud they meant legitimacy or confirmation of the power he had won by the sword: the justification of his conquests and the commission to enlarge them at the expense of heretical rebels and rebellious infidels. The latter were represented by the Hindu princes of India, the former by the Shi'ite Buyids in western Iran, but also by the Isma'ilis, who upheld the cause of the Fatimid caliph in Mahmud's own dominions.⁴⁴

Unlike the states of the Fatimids and the Buyids, Mahmud's empire was predicated upon continuous conquest, which paid for the large professional Turkish army out of the revenues of plunder, tribute and taxation of the conquered provinces, without the need for *iqta's* or fiefs in the Buyid sense. The

⁴² See Gibb (1962), pp. 141–50, 151–65; Rosenthal (1962), pp. 27–37; Kennedy (1986), pp. 241–3.

⁴³ See above, at n. 8; and Goitein (1942) and (1961), both repr. in (1966).

⁴⁴ For Mahmud and his dynasty, see Bosworth (1963) and (1975), ch. 5.

chief function of the large itinerant secretariat that accompanied the sultan on his expensive campaigns was thus to procure the sums required from each district of the immense realm, and keep the district officers themselves under constant scrutiny. When the Buyids of Rayy succumbed in 1029, their administration was left in place, but subjected to the harsh fiscal requirements of the new master. The Isma‘ilis presented the Ghaznavid conqueror with a similarly attractive target in the prosperous city-state of Multan in the Punjab, a satellite of Cairo so remote that fifty years earlier, at the time of the Isma‘ili conversion of the city (c. 958), the correspondence of the Fatimid Mu‘izz reveals mutual ignorance on the part of the imam and his followers in Sind and the Indus valley.⁴⁵ Multan under its Isma‘ili prince Da‘ud ibn Nasr was first made tributary, and then conquered in 1010 with a massacre of the Isma‘ilis, considered as vile heretics. Otherwise, Isma‘ilism served a propaganda purpose. It was by no means extirpated from India or the rest of Mahmud’s empire, but the persecution of its widespread following throughout his reign was a hallmark of his position at home and abroad. It led conspicuously to the execution in 1012–13 of the Fatimid *da‘i* al-Taharti, sent by Hakim to woo the sultan, but tried and condemned to death as an agent of the impostor, and eventually to the execution of his wazir Hasanak by Mahmud’s Mas‘ud, on charges which included the acceptance of a robe of honour from Cairo while on pilgrimage to Mecca.⁴⁶ Apart from such dramatic incidents and rhetorical statements, persecution itself seems largely to have been left to local zealots, and, given the nature of the Ghaznavid state, is likely to have been sporadic, intermittent and ineffective in wiping out its victims. Mahmud’s stance nevertheless established the Ghaznavids’ reputation as militant champions of Sunni Islam and the cause of the caliph. Under his son Mas‘ud, their imperial designs upon the territories of the Buyids were extended by pronouncement to encompass the liberation of Baghdad, the reopening of the route across the desert for the pilgrimage to the Holy Places and the assault upon Cairo.⁴⁷ Thus it formed the mould into which the Seljuqs poured in the middle of the century.

THE COMING OF THE SELJUQS

The Shi‘ite century, which began with the conquest of the Near and Middle East by armies of mountain tribesmen from within the original Arab empire, concluded with the invasion of its territories by tribal nomads from beyond its borders. This extension of the appeal of Islam – religion, way of life and civilization – from peoples left aside to peoples unreached by the Arab conquests,

⁴⁵ See Stern (1949) and (1955), both in (1983).

⁴⁶ See Bosworth (1963), pp. 51–4, 182–3, 187, 199–200.

⁴⁷ See Bosworth (1962) and (1975), p. 189.

bears witness to the spectacular growth of the empire they created into a flourishing commonwealth. The lands through which the Arab armies passed on their outward journey to the periphery of their empire had been drawn together by the elaboration of their creed as a religion of government in every sense of the word. A close cultural and economic relationship was articulated by the long-distance routes of trade and travel along the lines of the conquests in 'the arid zone' to which the Arab expansion was largely confined. 'The arid zone' is Hodgson's expression for the swathe of desert stretching from the Atlantic to central Asia and northern India, punctuated by seas, mountains and river valleys which create oases of fertility separated by huge wastes.⁴⁸ Placed in relationship to the Mediterranean by Braudel,⁴⁹ and to the Indian Ocean by Chaudhuri,⁵⁰ it is celebrated by Lombard as the geographical setting for 'the golden age of Islam', its period of prosperity from the middle of the eighth to the middle of the eleventh century.⁵¹ Hodgson's pessimistic view of the limitation of investment in agriculture and industry, and the consequent weakness of the economic base,⁵² is opposed to Lombard's optimistic assessment of the expansion of both in response to consumer demand.⁵³ Both Hodgson and Lombard agree upon the role of trade centred upon the major cities, larger, fewer and more widely spaced than in Europe, for example, but drawing in commodities not only from the length and breadth of the arid zone itself, the lands of Islam, but from outside: from Europe to the north, tropical Africa to the south, and India and China to the east. The ramifications of this market economy had established the civilization of the Near and Middle East as the central civilization of the known world.

The nomadic populations of the arid zone – Berbers, Arab bedouin and Turks – who flourished on the margins of this civilization had become involved with it in different ways. The Berbers of the western and central Sahara were instrumental in the important gold and slave trades across the desert with the western and central Sudan. The bedouin of Arabia and Egypt were torn between symbiosis with and settlement among the peasant populations and between marauding and military alliances with the rulers of the cities and the greater states, leading in the case of the 'Uqaylids of Iraq and the Mirdasids of Aleppo to petty dynasties. The similar relationship of the Turks of central Asia with the Iranian populations to the south, along the line of the Jaxartes or Sir Darya, was shot through by the trade in Turkish slave boys for the armies of *ghilman*, and overlaid by the import into the Islamic world of silk and porcelain from China and furs from Siberia and Russia. Behind this lurked the historic

⁴⁸ Hodgson (1974), *passim*. ⁴⁹ Braudel (1972), I, pp. 168–230.

⁵⁰ Chaudhuri (1985), chs. 1 and 2. ⁵¹ Lombard (1975).

⁵² Hodgson (1974), II, pp. 136–8. ⁵³ Lombard (1975), pp. 161–204.

threat of invasion of the lands on the periphery of the central Asiatic steppe by the horse-riding nomads who had appeared in Europe as the Huns; who had forced the Chinese to build the Great Wall; and whose wars with Iran were the stuff of legend, woven by Firdausi in the reign of Mahmud of Ghazna into the Persian epic of the *Shah-nama* or Book of Kings, and passing into English literature as the tale of Sohrab and Rustam. In the eleventh century, as Firdausi composed his masterpiece, that threat revived as the Turkish peoples closest to the Muslim frontier, the Qarluq and the Oghuz or Ghuzz, adopted Islam and advanced into Muslim territory.

At the end of the tenth century, as Mahmud of Ghazna seized the bulk of Samanid territory to the south of the Oxus, the Qarluq took over the homeland of the dynasty in Transoxania, and established their own Qarakhanid dynasty at Bukhara, whose power extended eastwards over the mountains to Kashghar in Farghana or Sinkiang.⁵⁴ To the west of the Qarluq towards the Aral Sea and the Volga, the Oghuz under their *yabghu* or khan were divided between paganism and Islam, which provided a minority of the chiefly clan with the opportunity to combat their rivals as *ghazis* or warriors upon the infidel. These were the sons of the eponymous chieftain Seljuq, who meanwhile became involved in the wars of the Qarakhanids in Transoxania and were eventually expelled southwards across the Oxus into Ghaznavid Khurasan. In an extraordinary decade following the death of Mahmud in 1030 and the accession of his son Mas‘ud, they and their nomadic followers, too elusive to be brought to battle, overran the province. In pursuit, the ponderous Ghaznavid army was deprived of the plunder it was accustomed to win and the revenue it expected to enjoy. Lured out into the desert in 1040, it was routed by the mobile Seljuq horde at the battle of Dandanqan. The harsh and unpopular Ghaznavid regime in Iran collapsed, leaving the dynasty only with its capital at Ghazna and its conquests in India, while the victorious Seljuq brothers, Tughril, Chaghri and Musa Yabghu, divided Iran between them.

Leaving the east to Chaghri and Musa, Tughril, the leader if not the eldest, turned west with his half-brother Ibrahim Inal to occupy the old Buyid kingdom of Rayy in 1041–3. There, they had been preceded by scattered bands of Oghuz who had fled from the wars in Khurasan, only to become embroiled in the warfare attending the efforts of the Daylami Kakuyids of Hamadan to win back the kingdom for themselves from the clutches of Mas‘ud. These bands of nomads, seeking pasture for their sheep as much as plunder, were constantly augmented as the victories of the Seljuqs opened the way to a stream of such emigrants out of their homelands into the pastures of northern Iran, from where they moved westwards towards Anatolia. Known as Turkmen or

⁵⁴ See Bosworth (1967), pp. 111–14, and (1968), pp. 5–7.

Turcomans, they were already into Azerbaijan and in the 1040s spread into Armenia, northern Iraq and northern Syria: Mosul was sacked in 1044. As Tughril moved into Rayy and Ibrahim Inal into Hamadan, they fled away from the Seljuqs' claim to overlordship and obedience. Beneath and ahead of the advance of the new Seljuq empire, a major new element was appearing in the population of the Near and Middle East.⁵⁵

Tughril may have followed the Turcomans westwards quite as much as he led them. What gave his advance its purpose was nevertheless his adoption of the pro-ʿAbbasid and specifically anti-Fatimid rhetoric of Masʿud, which brought this extraordinary story of an immigration that became an empire firmly into the context of Islam and its concerns. Whatever the Islam of the Seljuqs may have been at the outset of their career on the frontier, their profession of faith was a prerequisite of their participation in the wars of a Muslim country like Transoxania, and certainly a condition of success in the struggle for Khurasan. Without a cause or religious leader of their own, moreover, it was necessary that this Islam should be not only Sunni but ʿAbbasid. Thus the announcement of victory at Dandanqan was sent straight from the battlefield to Baghdad. It is clear that the Seljuqs had already conceived the possibility of power on these terms, and proceeded to claim the mantle of the Ghaznavids for the purpose, no doubt under the strong influence of the Khurasanian secretaries who passed into their service from the Ghaznavids.⁵⁶ In choosing the west as his province, Tughril as leader was identifying the ambitions of the Seljuqs with the cause of Sunni empire.

That did not prevent his marriage alliance with the last powerful Buyid ruler of Fars, Abu Kalijar ʿImad al-Din (1024–48), the victor in the long succession dispute following the death of Bahaʾ al-Dawla in 1012, which had thrown the Buyid regime in Baghdad into anarchy. The 1040s were not in fact a time of spectacular advance; the Seljuqs and the Turcomans in western Iran were confronted by a multiplicity of peoples and petty dynasties in the mountainous terrain with whom they were obliged to deal. The cause of empire was not helped by the growing divisions between the Turcomans on the one hand, the Seljuq leadership on the other, and between the leaders themselves. These divisions centred around the figure of Tughril's partner Ibrahim Inal at Hamadan, who sided with the Turcomans in their opposition to Seljuq control, while encouraging and occasionally leading their westward movement towards Anatolia. The growth of Tughril's power may have been steady, but it was consequently slow, and depended for its greatest advance in this period upon the death of Abu Kalijar at Shiraz in 1048 and the struggle over the succession

⁵⁵ See Bosworth (1975), pp. 187–95, and (1968), pp. 16–23, 23–53 *passim*.

⁵⁶ Bosworth (1968), pp. 45–6.

that promptly ensued. The barriers to the Turcoman invasion of Fars then collapsed; meanwhile Tughril, recognized by the Marwanids of Amid or Diyarbakr in 1049–50, took the remaining Kakuyid city of Isfahan as his capital in 1050–1 and proceeded to intervene in the succession at Shiraz, until by 1055 the Buyid kingdom under its new ruler Fulad-Sutun was all but annexed. The way was open to Baghdad, under the ineffective rule of Abu Kalijar's other son al-Malik al-Rahim. Control of the city was disputed between the Turkish commander al-Basasiri and Ibn al-Muslima, the wazir whom the ‘Abbasid caliph al-Qa’im had appointed in 1045 as a mark of his increasing independence. In 1055 Tughril assembled his forces for an expedition which, in the manner of the Ghaznavid Mas’ud, looked beyond Baghdad to the pilgrimage to Mecca and a war upon the Fatimids in Egypt. In December he made a processional entry into the city, received by the officers of the caliph though not by al-Qa’im in person, to fulfil the imperial destiny of the new dynasty.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE BANU HILAL

The tribes of bedouin Arabs, collectively known as the Banu Hilal, who made their appearance in North Africa in the middle of the eleventh century, shared with the Seljuqs a similar involvement in the conflict between Cairo and Baghdad, so much so that they are commonly said to have been sent from Egypt by the Fatimids in 1051 to punish the Zirids of Ifriqiya for their desertion to the ‘Abbasids. This, however, is a legend rooted in Fatimid historiography,⁵⁷ obscuring a different reality. The Banu Hilal belonged to what Ibn Khaldun called ‘the Arabs of the fourth age’, who had been left behind in the desert by the conquerors belonging to the great third age of the race, to emerge as the modern representatives of the ancient nation and its virtues after the founders of the Arab empire had been swallowed up by the civilization they had created.⁵⁸ Not strictly tribesmen from outside the old Arab empire, they nevertheless exemplified the utter savagery of people adapted to a life of utmost hardship, as far as possible from that of settlement and cities, by which they were alternately attracted and repulsed.⁵⁹ In the heart of Arabia, they had gone far to make the desert crossing from Iraq to Mecca and Medina impassable since the heyday of the ‘Abbasid empire, whence the stated aim of the Ghaznavids and Seljuqs to open the route and make the pilgrimage. On the fringes of the Fertile Crescent, they had revolted unsuccessfully on behalf of the Fatimid mahdi at the beginning of the tenth century, but had subsequently given rise to bedouin dynasties such as the ‘Uqaylids and Mirdasids. In Egypt they had

⁵⁷ See Brett (1982). ⁵⁸ See Cheddadi (1986), pp. 135–6, 419–24.

⁵⁹ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, I, pp. 250–2, 306–8, II, pp. 279–80.

spread southwards on either side of the Nile towards Aswan, and wandered westwards out into the territories of the native Berber nomads of the Sahara. In the second half of the tenth century, the Banu Hilal were reported by Ibn Hawqal to frequent the western oases of Kharga and Dakhla.⁶⁰ But in the eleventh century, bedouin such as the Banu Qurra of Cyrenaica had shared in the revolt of Abu Rakwa against Hakim and had gone on to take control of Barqa. In 1037–8, the Hilali tribe of the Zughba had killed the Berber prince of Tripoli, Saʿid ibn Khazrun, and ten years later were entering into an alliance with Muʿizz ibn Badis, the Zirid sultan of Ifriqiya.⁶¹ As warrior nomads newly established in the northern Sahara, they entered in this way into the politics of the Fatimid empire in North Africa at a time when it was under great strain, presenting Cairo with a far more immediate problem than the advance of the Seljuqs in the east.

In Cairo, the gap between the affairs of the Dawla proper in Egypt and Syria, and the concerns of the Fatimid empire at large, was slow to close. The 1040s were a decade in which the regime was preoccupied with the succession to the wazirate following the death of al-Jarjaraʿi in 1045. Ever since the accession of the infant Imam–Caliph al-Mustansir in 1036, this eminently capable politician had been faced with the hostility of the new queen-mother Rasad, who employed her immense personal wealth as Sitt al-Mulk and Ruqiyya had done, to build up a following in the administration, this time in opposition to the old wazir. Al-Jarjaraʿi was weakened by his distrust of his old ally al-Dizbiri in Syria. In 1041 he engineered a military coup at Damascus which drove Dizbiri, branded a traitor, into exile and death at Aleppo. Aleppo itself was promptly reoccupied by the Mirdasids; the Jarrahids of Palestine were again in revolt; and the new governor of Damascus, Nasir al-Dawla ibn Hamdan, a scion of the old Hamdanid dynasty, was unable to restore the position. In Egypt, the queen-mother's *coterie* was headed by Abu Saʿd al-Tustari, the Iranian Jewish merchant who had purveyed her as a concubine to the caliph al-Zahir, and now served as steward of her estates. When al-Jarjaraʿi died, his chief lieutenants were the only possible candidates for the succession; but the first, al-Anbari, was almost immediately deposed, and his colleague, the converted Jew al-Fallahi, was appointed on the recommendation of al-Tustari, whose influence was now paramount. Al-Anbari was imprisoned and executed; but in 1047 the new wazir rebelled against his tutelage, and connived at the murder of al-Tustari in the street by Turkish soldiery. For this he too was deposed, imprisoned and eventually executed; al-Tustari's brother Abu Nasr was given charge of the *khizanat al-khass* or 'privy purse' of the caliph, while the stewardship of

⁶⁰ Ibn Hawqal, *Surat al-ard*, ed. Kramers, p. 155; trans. Kramers and Wiet, p. 153.

⁶¹ See Brett (1974–5).

the queen-mother's estates went to a very different man, the Ismaʿili scholar al-Yazuri from Ramla in Palestine. The wazirate itself remained in the hands of the Jarjaraʿi faction in the person of the great man's nephew, Abu'l-Barakat al-Jarjaraʿi, whose notorious arrests, banishments and confiscations were presumably intended to secure himself against the fate of his two predecessors. He attempted to remove al-Yazuri from politics by appointing him chief *qadi* and chief *daʿi*; but al-Yazuri survived by appointing his son as his deputy over the queen-mother's estates.⁶²

The tension was only resolved by a disastrous expedition against Aleppo in 1049, for which Abu'l-Barakat was responsible, and for which he was dismissed. In 1050 al-Yazuri was appointed in his place and the transfer of power within the administration from one party to another was finally complete. His position was by no means so secure as that of al-Jarjaraʿi, in that the followers of his predecessor remained entrenched in the army of secretaries and soldiers, jealous of his promotion and anxious for their places. Enjoying the confidence of the palace, al-Yazuri was nevertheless able to assert his authority at home and abroad, beginning with Syria, where he and his chief military ally Nasir al-Dawla effected a reconciliation with the Mirdasids. The alliance with Byzantium was confirmed, while to the south, an expedition, sent to Nubia to demand the tribute known as the *baqt* or 'pact', renewed the Fatimids' generally friendly relations with the Christian kingdom.⁶³ From the Yemen came a bonus in the form of presents sent by the *daʿi* al-Sulayhi to announce the progress of the campaign of conquest he had undertaken in 1038.⁶⁴ Out to the west, however, the situation was more menacing.

Morally and materially, the position of the Zirids of Ifriqiya had been undermined since the beginning of the century. Their western province in Algeria had been lost to their cousins the Hammadids, while Tripoli had been seized by the Banu Khazrun, Zanata Berber nomads from western Algeria militarized by a century of war between the Fatimids and the Umayyads of Cordoba in the west. Their control of the oases of southern Tunisia was threatened not only by the immigrant Zanata, but by the Berber populations of Djerba, the Jabal Nafusa and the Djerid, the majority of whom were Ibadis, opposed to Shiʿites and Sunnis alike. At Qayrawan itself, the old Arab capital of the

⁶² Besides al-Maqrizi's *Ittiʿaz*, the principal sources for the history of Egypt in this period are, in chronological order: Ibn al-Sayrafi, *Al-Ishara* (to 1130); Ibn Muyassar, *Akhbar Misr* (late thirteenth century); and al-Maqrizi, *Khitat* (early fifteenth century); together with Ibn al-Athir, *Kitab* (early thirteenth century).

⁶³ Al-Maqrizi, *Ittiʿaz*, II, p. 222. For the *baqt* as the basis of Egyptian relations with Nubia in the Muslim period, see *Cambridge History of Africa* (1978), II, pp. 505–6, 565–7, and *passim*; Hasan (1967), pp. 20–8, 90–3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

country, the dynasty resident in the old Fatimid palace of Sabra, confronted an unruly populace. The grievances of the citizens were probably economic, in that the prosperity generated by the Fatimids had diminished, while that of Tunis in particular is likely to have increased.⁶⁵ But they were made specific by the opposition between the dynasty which ruled in the name of the Fatimid imam and the Sunni '*ulama*' or jurists of the Malikite school, who had made Qayrawan one of the great seats of Sunni scholarship. Behind their learned objections to Isma'ilism stood a militant zeal which threatened not only riot but revolution. In 1016 or 1017, following the accession of the young sultan Mu'izz ibn Badis, and in the final phase of Hakim's reign, the crowd throughout Ifriqiya turned on the Isma'ilis and massacred them in defiance of the authorities. The long reign of Mu'izz became in consequence a slow movement towards Sunnism, in which the sultan allied with the greater jurists in the hope of isolating and eliminating the more radical preachers. By the 1030s and 1040s, the regime was increasingly embattled, campaigning against the Hammadids on the one hand, the Zanata on the other. Mu'izz nevertheless intervened in the quarrels of Muslim Sicily as the Kalbid dynasty at Palermo weakened, apparently hoping to annex the island; the attempt was a failure, and the Ifriqiyans were expelled, either by the Sicilians themselves or by the Byzantine general George Maniakes in 1038–40. Despite the lack of success, this obscure episode prefigured a grander attempt to revive the fortunes of the dynasty by seizing the initiative at home and abroad.⁶⁶

In 1048, Mu'izz formally abjured his allegiance to the imam–caliph, and transferred it to the 'Abbasids. The date given by the Zirid chronicler Ibn Sharaf⁶⁷ is confirmed by the coinage, which in AH 441, 1049–50, changed from the gold *dinar* of the Fatimids to one bearing the Qur'anic legend – 'Whoever chooses a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he shall be lost' – a denunciation of the Fatimids and their followers as heretics.⁶⁸ Diplomatic relations with Baghdad may have dated from the appointment of Ibn al-Muslima as 'Abbasid wazir in 1045; the Persian al-Darimi, who had served under Mahmud of Ghazna, apparently arrived as 'Abbasid envoy to Qayrawan in 1047–8.⁶⁹ A second such envoy was seized by the Byzantines at Antioch in 1051 and sent to Cairo, where the 'Abbasid insignia he was taking to Mu'izz were publicly burnt.⁷⁰ It was all that al-Yazuri could do in reply to an opponent who had captured the Sunni cause in North Africa, and set out to create a rival Sunni empire in the west. The Banu Khazrun at Tripoli and the Banu Qurra at Barqa both declared for Baghdad

⁶⁵ See Brett (1969). ⁶⁶ For exhaustive references, see Idris (1962); Amari (1937–9).

⁶⁷ As reported by Ibn 'Idhari, *Al-Bayan al-muqhrub*, pp. 277–9.

⁶⁸ See Hazard (1952), pp. 52–5, 90–3.

⁶⁹ Idris (1962), pp. 191–2. ⁷⁰ See Brett (1982), p. 49.

and Mu‘izz. Under their amir Jabbara ibn Mukhtar, the Banu Qurra, who had risen against the Fatimids under Abu Rakwa at the beginning of the century, attacked Alexandria once again in 1052, only to be defeated.

Mu‘izz’s ambitions, however, came to grief much nearer home. From around the time of his breach with Cairo in 1048, the sultan had allied with the Hilali Arab bedouin tribes of Zughba and Riyah, to whom he had given land in return for military service. The land in question is likely to have been the Jaffara plain between Gabes and Tripoli, a strategic corridor blocked by the Germans in the Second World War at Mareth, and threatened in the eleventh century by the Berbers of Djerba and the Jabal Nafusa. Such an attempt to pacify the region nevertheless failed when the Arabs advanced north of Gabes in search of more land. In 1052 a major expedition led by Mu‘izz to reassert his authority over the south was ambushed by the two tribes in hilly country some two or three day’s march from Qayrawan, and routed at the battle of Haydaran. With the loss of all his baggage, Mu‘izz fled back to his capital, which was promptly besieged as the Arabs overran the countryside. A disaster which might have been remedied was made permanent by the appeal of the Riyah and Zughba to Cairo, and the intervention of Egypt in the following year. While the tribes were encouraged to resume the siege of Qayrawan, al-Yazuri’s envoy, the general Amin al-Dawla wa Makinuha Hasan ibn ‘Ali ibn Mulhim,⁷¹ appeared at Gabes to receive the submission of the cities of Ifriqiya on the one hand, and the breakaway Hammadids of eastern Algeria on the other, returning to Cairo with a share of the booty taken by the Arabs in the battle.⁷² The old state of Ifriqiya, dating back to Byzantine Africa, finally disintegrated. Mu‘izz abandoned the inland city of Qayrawan for the more defensible coastal fortress of Mahdia in 1057, while the great metropolis was emptied of its inhabitants. Some jurists remained to preserve the Malikite tradition, but many emigrated, not least to Morocco. At Sijilmasa they handed on the torch of Sunni empire to the Almoravids. This militant Sunni movement, created out of the Sanhaja Berber nomads of the western Sahara by a prophet of the Malikite school inspired from Qayrawan, was at the outset of its career, victorious in the desert and advancing north. The *dinars* first minted by the Almoravids at Sijilmasa in the year of Mu‘izz’s flight to Mahdia replicated his aggressively Sunni coinage, while at Mahdia itself the Zirids reverted to their Fatimid allegiance and thus to the Fatimid style.⁷³ It was in the name of Sunni Islam that the Almoravids went on to build an empire of their own in the Muslim west, one that under the Almohads in the following century embraced Ifriqiya itself.

⁷¹ Thus in the Fatimid letter which is the fundamental document: Brett (1982), pp. 51–2, but Makin al-Dawla in the chronicles.

⁷² See Brett (1974–5) and (1982). ⁷³ See Launois (1964); Idris (1962), pp. 225–6.

The Almoravids effected the third great invasion of the old Arab empire by tribal nomads drawn into Islam by the religious and political quarrels of the Shi'ite century. In North Africa, they represented the same appeal of Islam to the tribal population to make a new submission to God to fight for the faith against His enemies, which had brought the Fatimids to power in Ifriqiya 150 years before and was to culminate in the takeover of their empire by the Almohads 100 years later.⁷⁴ Unlike either the Seljuqs or the Banu Hilal, they formed a specifically religious as well as ethnic community, which, although it founded an empire, as did the Seljuqs, was unaccompanied by an influx of nomads who altered the composition of the population in the lands it conquered. The Banu Hilal, on the other hand, founded no empire, despite the favour shown by the Fatimids to leaders like the Riyahid Mu'nis ibn Yahya, who posed in southern Tunisia as the Sahib Ifriqiya or Lord of Ifriqiya, and despite the prominence of the bedouin in the campaigns of the warring princes who ruled the country for the next hundred years. Their failure to rise to the imperial occasion, even in the absence of a religious leader, is all the more remarkable in view of the progressive bedouinization and Arabization of the rural population, which over the centuries has reduced the native Berber element to a minority.⁷⁵ The fact remains that even at their kingmaking worst, the Banu Hilal remained as nomads within the framework of the state system.

THE CRISIS OF THE FATIMID EMPIRE

Ironically, the return of the Zirids to Fatimid allegiance in 1057, even at the cost of the disintegration of their dominions, was a triumph for al-Yazuri which he did not live to enjoy. Early in 1058 he was arrested and executed on a charge of treason. Over the two years since the arrival of Tughril Beg in Baghdad at the end of 1055, the internal and external affairs of the Fatimid realm had drawn together with a vengeance to precipitate a crisis at home and abroad. The elements of the crisis had fallen into place over a number of years, beginning with the situation in Baghdad itself, where fighting between Sunnis and Shi'ites accompanied the hostility between the 'Abbasid wazir Ibn al-Muslima and the Turkish commander al-Basasiri, who as the Buyid regime weakened had turned towards Egypt. In Egypt itself, al-Yazuri faced a domestic trial of strength in the form of famine in 1052 and 1054–5. The problem was not so much shortage of grain as hoarding; the difficulty was to force supplies on to the market, since the speculators were not only the merchants but the landholding aristocracy, from the caliph down. The last serious famine, in 1024–5, had provoked disturbances because, in the years leading up to al-Jarjara's appointment as wazir, he and his

⁷⁴ See Brett (1983) and (1994b).

⁷⁵ See Brett and Fentress (1995), ch. 4.

colleagues had taken no action in the matter, presumably to avoid antagonizing their backers.⁷⁶ Al-Yazuri did so, to the extent of advising the caliph to invest in less publicly harmful activities, as well as ensuring that all grain collected in taxes reached the state granaries for release on to the market;⁷⁷ but he cannot have made many friends in high places. More immediately, he sought grain from Byzantium; but the emperor Constantine IX died in January 1055 and the aid was refused by the aged empress Theodora, anxious not to antagonize the Seljuqs pushing into Armenia and eastern Anatolia. Egypt was in consequence unable to supply the Hijaz with the grain on which the pilgrimage depended. Since at the same time the empress had ordered the prayers in the mosque at Constantinople to be said in the name of the ‘Abbasids rather than the Fatimids, Egypt declared war, sending Makin al-Dawla ibn Mulhim, returned from his mission to Ifriqiya, to attack both Antioch and Aleppo, where the Mirdasids had allied with the Turcomans. When Tughril Beg finally entered Baghdad, the Fatimids in Syria were in arms.

Ousted by the Seljuqs from Baghdad, al-Basasiri moved up to Rahba on the Euphrates, and appealed to Cairo for aid. Behind al-Yazuri at this juncture stood the distinguished Iranian *da‘i* al-Mu’ayyad fi’l-Din al-Shirazi, the last of the great Fatimid philosophers, who, like his predecessor al-Kirmani, hailed from the Buyid realm of Fars. In the 1030s and 1040s he had spent some ten years at the court of Abu Kalijar, who lent a sympathetic ear to his exposition of Isma‘ilism until ‘Abbasid pressure forced his expulsion to Cairo in 1046–7. At Cairo al-Shirazi was thwarted by the appointment of al-Yazuri as chief *da‘i*, who bestowed the post on the descendants of the *qadi* al-Nu‘man when he became wazir, but in 1052 took charge of the *diwan al-insha‘* or chancellery, the office of state correspondence and diplomacy. Al-Shirazi persuaded al-Yazuri to accede to al-Basasiri’s request, and he was duly entrusted with the mission of organizing and financing an Arab tribal coalition in northern Syria and Iraq for the purpose. In 1057, while Makin al-Dawla continued the offensive against Antioch and Aleppo with the help of reinforcements sent under the command of al-Yazuri’s son, al-Basasiri defeated the Seljuqs at Sinjar north of Mosul and briefly occupied Mosul itself. In 1058 the effort was crowned with success. At the beginning of the year Makin al-Dawla captured Aleppo, and sent the body of al-Dizbiri, driven into exile by al-Jarjara’i, to Cairo for honourable burial. At the end of the year, while Tughril Beg was drawn away from Baghdad by the revolt of Ibrahim Inal, he occupied the city and proclaimed the suzerainty of the Fatimids. Al-Basasiri’s great enemy, the ‘Abbasid wazir Ibn al-Muslima, was put to a frightful death, but the ‘Abbasid caliph himself was placed under the protection of the ‘Uqaylid prince Quraysh. Only the insignia of his caliphate

⁷⁶ See Bianquis (1980).

⁷⁷ Al-Maqrizi, *Itti‘az*, II, pp. 224–6; *idem*, *Traité des famines*, pp. 18–22.

were sent to Cairo, where they were received in triumph by Mustansir in 1059. From the Fatimid point of view, the episode was a crowning victory for the dynasty's campaign to win the world for the imam by revolution rather than conquest, especially since the *da'i* al-Sulayhi in the Yemen was on the verge of complete success. But whereas the campaign in the Yemen was one of dedication, the league commanded by al-Basasiri was an ephemeral alliance of the forces of anarchy in late Buyid Iraq. The return of Tughril Beg from his final victory over Ibrahim Inal at the end of the year drove al-Basasiri from the city, to die in battle in January 1060.⁷⁸ The whole episode had been, said the Egyptian chronicler Ibn Muyassar, 'the last happiness of the Egyptian empire'.⁷⁹

The train was laid before ever al-Basasiri entered Baghdad. Whatever the expectations of Mustansir from his capture of the 'Abbasid city, Egyptian aid to the enterprise had been cut off since the spring of 1058. At the end of February, al-Yazuri fell victim to the charge of his opponents that by sending all the wealth of Egypt for the conquest of Baghdad, he had provoked the wrath of the Seljuqs and so imperilled the realm. The charge was distorted, and envenomed, by the accusation of treasonable correspondence with Tughril Beg, and of plans to flee to Baghdad. The wazir was arrested and executed by order of the caliph. He was briefly replaced with his close lieutenant al-Babili, until another protégé of the queen-mother's, al-Maghribi, was promoted from within al-Yazuri's circle of appointments; the damage, however, was done. The new wazir sought to disengage the regime from the conflict in Iraq, while returning Nasir al-Dawla al-Hamdani to Damascus to maintain control of Syria; but the regime itself had been undermined by the execution of his predecessor. Al-Maghribi fell in 1060 in exactly the same way as his predecessor Abu'l-Barakat in 1049, in the wake of a major expedition he had sent under Nasir al-Dawla to recapture the ever-rebellious city of Aleppo, which ended in disaster. But on this occasion no alternative faction existed within the administration, to whose leader power could be transferred as it had been from the party of al-Jarjara'i to that of al-Yazuri ten years previously; and government broke down.

Over the next few years, the wazirate became a merry-go-round of appointments lasting no more than a few months or weeks, as candidates failed to gain the support of their colleagues or the palace, and lost all credibility. On the whole, the turnover was not bloody, as it had been under Hakim; many, beginning with al-Babili, were appointed three or four times. But the political system built by al-Jarjara'i for the benefit of the Men of the Pen had collapsed

⁷⁸ For the career of al-Shirazi, see *Diwan*, pp. 259–60; Sirat al-Mu'ayyad, p. 56; 'The Sira'; for that of al-Basasiri, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1954–), s.v. art. Canard.

⁷⁹ Ibn Muyassar, *Akhbar Misr*, p. 21.

under the strain of intrigue. In this second great crisis of the patrimonial state in Egypt the monarchy, far from reasserting its control, merely accelerated the breakdown by placing its trust in those whom Maqrizi contemptuously calls *rijal*, ‘men’, by whom we are to understand a crowd of favourites who plied the caliph with letters and petitions to the exclusion of the officers of state. The wazirate in consequence was utterly devalued, while the revenues of state were systematically diverted into the pockets of the new men. Maqrizi, who waged his personal campaign for honest government in the fifteenth century, may have written for the sake of effect, to provide a historical example of the faults traditionally exposed in legendary guise in the Mirrors for Princes literature;⁸⁰ but the ultimate derivation of his information from Fatimid sources is not in dispute, and the analysis interpolated into his chronicle at this point seems fair comment.⁸¹ In the absence of political direction, the army divided into its own ethnic factions, represented by the Turkish *ghilman* on the one hand and the Black ‘*abid al-shira*’ or ‘bought slaves’ on the other. These were the product of the trans-Saharan slave trade, whether from Nubia or the central Sudan, who functioned as bowmen and spearmen and had supposedly been acquired in large numbers by Rasad, the Black queen-mother, as a defence against the Turks who had killed her mentor al-Tustari.⁸² On parade in 1063 the two sides came to blows; and although they were parted the antagonism remained.

Matters came to a head in 1067 when the Turks at Cairo emptied the treasury and eventually the palace with their demands for pay; the blacks were driven out to brigandage in Upper Egypt; and Nasir al-Dawla al-Hamdani set out to seize and hold the wazirate by force of arms. The *fitna* or strife endured for seven or eight years, accompanied by a prolonged *shidda* or famine throughout the land, less the result of a low Nile than the breakdown of government, law and order. While land went out of cultivation, the taxation and marketing of whatever grain there was disintegrated. Nomads, both Arab and Berber, devastated the Delta and the Valley while the struggle developed between Nasir al-Dawla and the Turks at Cairo for control of the capital. Repeatedly besieged and cut off, the great metropolis was particularly hard hit. The story of the caliph sitting on a mat in an empty palace, fed only by charity, may be a *topos* belied by the equally emblematic tale of the caliph in the depth of despair, shamed into taking effective action to bring grain on to the market by a lady who had exchanged a necklace worth 1,000 dinars for a bag of flour, but which, after she had been robbed on the way home, was only enough for a cake.⁸³ The extant information, however, is at least partially derived from an eyewitness

⁸⁰ See e.g. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, II, pp. 104–6.

⁸¹ Al-Maqrizi, *Itti‘az*, II, pp. 262–3; *idem*, *Traité des famines*, pp. 24–6.

⁸³ Al-Maqrizi, *Itti‘az*, II, pp. 298–9; *idem*, *Traité des famines*, pp. 25–7.

⁸² See above, p. 694.

account.⁸⁴ As at Qayrawan ten years earlier, people left the city, in this case for Syria, while the remainder were reduced to eating dogs and, allegedly, each other. The treasure of the dynasty was undoubtedly dispersed, with much, including the 'Abbasid insignia, apparently finding its way to Baghdad. It was an extreme example of the dearth described by Bianquis for the years 1024–5, with valuables sold for food to the point of beggary:⁸⁵ a comment on the precariousness of the economy under such a system of distribution, with the difference that on this occasion the famine was real; it affected the countryside and, compounded with plague, led to a drastic fall in the population which affected the country well into the next century.

On the political level, the dynasty itself was threatened with extinction in 1070–1, when Nasir al-Dawla wrote from Alexandria to the Seljuq sultan Alp Arslan, inviting him to send an army to restore Egypt to its 'Abbasid allegiance, while Alp Arslan himself arrived at Aleppo to renew the Seljuq offensive against Cairo. Since the debacle of 1060, the Fatimid position in Syria had crumbled, despite the tenacity of the Fatimid commanders: the Arab Makin al-Dawla followed by the Kutama Berber Haydara ibn Manzu, but notably by the Armenian Badr al-Jamali. Their difficulties centred upon Damascus, where Badr al-Jamali became governor in 1063, only to begin a conflict with the citizens and their notables which forced him from the city in 1064 and finally in 1068, when his enemy Nasir al-Dawla intrigued with the opposition and with the bedouin, who had taken advantage of the growing anarchy to overrun the settled lands. Badr al-Jamali retired to Acre on the coast, while the Syrian capital was torn by fighting between the townsfolk with their *ahdath* or militias, ill-disciplined Fatimid troops under the command of Ibn Manzu's son Mu'alla, and the tribal Arab Kalb: in 1069 the Great Umayyad Mosque was burnt. In 1062, Acre and Tiberias had been entrusted to the safe hands of Makin al-Dawla and with Sidon to the north and Caesarea to the south it became under Badr al-Jamali the bastion of what remained of Fatimid rule in Syria. Between Acre and Sidon, however, Tyre was under the command of its *qadi* Ibn Abi' Aqil, who successfully resisted the siege of the city by Badr al-Jamali in 1070. Further north, Tripoli had likewise gained its independence under its *qadi* Ibn 'Ammar. To the south, Ramla, the Fatimid capital of Palestine, provided Nasir al-Dawla with a centre from which to assemble a tribal coalition out of the bedouin Tayy and Kalb, in the hope of recovering Syria for himself. A mere vestige of Fatimid rule remained at Aleppo, disputed by the princes of the Mirdasid dynasty, who retained the Friday prayer in the name of Mustansir more out of respect for the Shi'ism of the population than obedience to Cairo.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Ibn Muyassar, *Akhbar Misr*, Introduction, pp. dh, d, t.

⁸⁵ See above, at n. 76.

⁸⁶ The obscure and complicated story is documented by Bianquis, (1986), pp. 527–652.

Despite this breakdown of the regime in Syria as well as Egypt, however, the protracted crisis of the Fatimid empire unfolded throughout the 1060s in the absence of either the Seljuqs or the Turcomans. Tughril Beg had died in 1063, to be succeeded by his nephew Alp Arslan as sultan or ruler of the world in the name of the ‘Abbasid caliph. ‘King of the East and the West’, Tughril appears to have been content for the moment with the position he had won as head of a great new family empire. The war against heretics and infidels, which had carried him to Baghdad, was not an overriding imperative, but a posture only to be practised when it coincided with imperial policy. That policy was not necessarily one of conquest. The Seljuqs differed from their predecessors the Ghaznavids, who had campaigned systematically to keep their professional army in plunder and pay. At the same time they differed from their successors the Mongols, whose family empire was based on control of the tribes in their homeland on the steppe. As the conflict with the restless Ibrahim Inal and the adventurous Turcoman chieftains in the west had shown, the Great Seljuq sultan was obliged to fight *against* unlimited expansion in order to assert his authority. Under Tughril’s successor Alp Arslan the pattern of the empire became clearer. A growing distinction appeared between the Turcomans and the *ghilman* recruited into the guards of the Seljuq princes; the rebellions of those princes helped to confirm the distribution of their dominions in the east; while the warrior sultan himself favoured peace with the Qarakhanids in Transoxania, the Ghaznavids in Afghanistan and India and the Byzantine empire in Anatolia. This was the region of greatest difficulty, where Turcoman penetration provoked the Byzantine emperor Romanos Diogenes to campaign across the mountains as far as the Euphrates to secure the frontier cities of Antioch, Edessa and Malatya. After his own years of campaigning in Armenia and the Caucasus, it was this confrontation as much as renewed interest in Fatimid Syria and Egypt that brought Alp Arslan to Aleppo in 1071, and gave him a famous victory when he returned northwards to encounter the emperor at Manzikert in Armenia. The battle entailed the historic collapse of the old Roman empire in Asia Minor and a major change in the historical geography of the eastern Mediterranean; but it was no part of the sultan’s strategy, and was followed up only by the Turcomans, to whom Anatolia was now completely open. Alp Arslan himself went east against the Qarakhanids, but was killed the following year; and the Seljuq invasion of Syria was again deferred.

The Turcomans were a different matter. From their first appearance at Aleppo in 1065, they entered Syria in the manner of the Banu Hilal in Ifriqiya, as bands of warriors to whom the local princes turned as allies against the native bedouin as well as each other. Warriors, however, they remained, rather than the avant-garde of a nomadic immigration into a land whose pasture was both unfamiliar and subject to the different regime of a different culture. Only on

the northern borders of the country beyond Aleppo did they begin to compete with the local populations, including the Arabs of the Mirdasids' own people, the Kilab. Further south, they were invited to help defend Tyre against Badr al-Jamali in 1070, but he may well have called on them himself to dislodge the brother of Nasir al-Dawla from Ramla in 1071.⁸⁷ Atsiz, their leader, took not only Ramla but also Jerusalem, and went on to attack Damascus, doggedly held against the citizens on the one hand and the Turcomans on the other by the Fatimid troops of Mu'alla. For several years thereafter, Atsiz returned in spring to devastate the oasis beyond the walls, until he allied with the citizens to dislodge Mu'alla in 1075 and enter the city in 1076. Although he recognized the new caliph al-Muqtadi at Baghdad, he was effectively independent of the new Seljuq sultan Malikshah.

In the meanwhile the crisis in Egypt itself had been resolved. Nasir al-Dawla was murdered by the Turks at Cairo in 1073 and Dakaz or Bildukuz (Ildeguz), their commander, was left aimlessly in charge of the state. But Mustansir sent for Badr al-Jamali at Acre, who arrived by sea with his troops at the beginning of 1074 and within three years had massacred the Turks and cleared the Delta and the Valley of bedouin and brigands. His departure from Syria entailed the loss of Acre to a second Turkish adventurer, but the end of the *fitna* meant the end of the *shidda* and a gradual return to normality. The difference lay in the character of the regime. As wazir, Badr al-Jamali bore the title of *amir al-juyush* or Commander of the Armies. The transition of the patrimonial state in Egypt from direction by the Men of the Pen to direction by the Men of the Sword, so disastrously commenced by Nasir al-Dawla, was complete.

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FATIMID STATE

The revolution was permanent, in that the military remained in charge of the government of Egypt down to the Ottoman conquest in 1517, their dominance never challenged by the secretariat, but only by the Fatimids themselves in the middle of the following century. Badr himself, a convert from Christianity, was in the paradoxical position of depending absolutely on the caliph for his authority while relying on the army for his power, which put him beyond the reach of the palace executioner. At one and the same time, therefore, he identified himself with the monarchy as the Great Lord, Commander of the Armies, Sword of Islam, Giver of Victory to the Imam, the Fortunate Star (Abu Najm), Full Moon of Mustansir (Badr al-Mustansiri), while taking over all the offices of the dynasty, including that of chief *da'i* on the retirement and death of al-Shirazi in 1078. Officially, at least, he enjoyed the confidence of

⁸⁷ See Cahen (1974), no. 1.

Mustansir, who recommended him to the faithful in the Yemen as the saviour of the state.⁸⁸ The defence of the realm was a clear priority, and the military character of his regime was affirmed by the rebuilding of the old brick walls of al-Qahira, the royal city, in stone; with their three great gates of Bab Zawila, Bab al-Futuh and Bab al-Nasr, these represented an extension into Egypt of the castle building that transformed both warfare and society in the Islamic world after the spacious palaces of the Age of the Caliphates. In 1077 Badr repelled an invasion of Egypt by Atsiz, whom he besieged in Damascus the following year, only to be driven back by Tutush, the brother of Malikshah. The city became Tutush's capital, while his lieutenant Urtuq was installed in Jerusalem. With Syria at last in Seljuq hands, however, the new rulers continued to look north rather than south, towards Aleppo and Byzantine Antioch. These they captured in 1085, giving Badr the opportunity for a second attack on Damascus. In 1089 he was more successful in recovering the ports of Sidon, Tyre, Acre and Jubayl, thus recreating for Egypt what was essentially a maritime empire on the Palestinian littoral, maintained from the sea by the surprisingly powerful Fatimid fleet and paying for itself from the revenues of trade. But Badr's most notable achievements were in Egypt itself.

The chronicles are thin on his reign as wazir, and the evidence for his reformation of the provincial administration largely indirect. Lists of administrative districts from various sources at various times show a sharp change in the second half of the eleventh century from 50–70 *kuwar* (sing. *kura*), the units of provincial administration inherited by the Arabs from the Byzantines, to some 26 *a'mal* (sing. *'amal*), or districts. These in turn were grouped into five large provinces: Qus in the south; Middle Egypt with a capital at Asyut or Ashmunayn; Sharqiyya, the eastern Delta; al-Gharbiyya, the western Delta; and Alexandria. We first hear of the province of Qus, whose governor was responsible for the Nubian frontier and for the passage of the pilgrimage up the Nile and then across the desert to the port of 'Aydhab, in 1079–80, which would date the change to the outset of Badr's reign. The five provinces were clearly designed to extend the military regime at Cairo to the country as a whole; the creation of the *a'mal* was probably an overdue recognition of the fact that the governors of the *kuwar* had long lost their original fiscal functions to tax farmers on the one hand and treasury officials on the other, retaining only their responsibility for law and order. While the *kuwar* survived as tax districts, tax collection was now clearly the responsibility of the *musharif* or tax inspector of each province, working with escorts provided by the governors of the new *a'mal*. The production of taxes, on the other hand, was equally clearly the responsibility of tax farmers, in charge of the regulation of the

⁸⁸ See al-Mustansir, *Al-sijillat*; described in 'The letters', letter nos. 14–16, 20–2, 32, 34.

Nile flood and the cultivation of the land. Here again Badr introduced a new principle.⁸⁹

With the pacification of Egypt complete in 1076, Badr remitted the *kharaj* or land tax for a period of three years to allow the country to recover. To make good the loss of revenue, on which he depended to pay his troops, he allocated the land tax farms, through whose agency the land would be brought back into production, as *iqta's* to his men for a probable period of thirty years. He thus introduced into Egypt the Buyid practice of assigning particular revenues to individual soldiers at source instead of through the treasury, with this difference, that the 'fiefs' in question remained tax farms, cultivated for their revenue to the state by soldiers whose pay came from the excess profit. An emergency measure modified in the following century, the device nevertheless survived to become the fiscal foundation of the Mamluk army in the later middle ages.⁹⁰ As a means to fiscal recovery, it apparently succeeded in restoring the revenues of Egypt to around their normal level of 3 million dinars towards the end of Badr's life.⁹¹ Politically, it gave the troops a vested interest in the regime.

Badr himself endeavoured to perpetuate his relationship to the dynasty by marrying his daughter to the caliph's youngest son Ahmad, while designating his own son al-Afdal as heir to the wazirate. The arrangement barely survived the test, for when Badr died in 1094, Mustansir initially appointed another amir, and was forced to accept al-Afdal by the bulk of the army. When the caliph himself died eight months later, it was the turn of al-Afdal to secure the succession of Ahmad in place of Mustansir's eldest son Nizar, moving rapidly to proclaim him as the designated heir of his father. Nizar, who claimed the designation for himself, fled to Alexandria, where his revolt collapsed and he was captured, to be walled up alive in one of the great new gates of al-Qahira. Against Ahmad, who called himself al-Musta'li, 'the Elevated', Nizar had taken the title al-Mustafa, 'the Chosen', a clear indication of the critical importance of the selection of the imam by his predecessor, which on the one hand secured the continuity of divine guidance and on the other had so far preserved the dynasty from the succession disputes which racked so many others: since the arrival of the dynasty in Egypt, all males other than the imam had withdrawn without protest into obscurity. The designation of Ahmad and the legitimacy of his succession as Musta'li duly became an article of Fatimid faith; but it was rejected by the Iranian Isma'ilis, who finally separated themselves from Cairo in the name of Nizar. For al-Afdal, it was crucial to his survival, and the beginning of his own career. Ahmad had no ambitions, and when he died in

⁸⁹ See Brett (1984), and more generally Rabie (1972).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, and Brett (1995a). The evidence comes from the time of Badr's son al-Afdal: see below.

⁹¹ See Lane-Poole (1914), pp. 151–2; Maspero and Wiet (1919), pp. 192–3. The reports (*ibid.*) of 1 million dinars under al-Yazuri, and 5 million dinars under Badr's son al-Afdal, are subject to caution.

1101, the wazir became the regent for his five-year-old son al-Amir. In 1110 he moved his residence, and thus the seat of government, out of al-Qahira to a new palace, the Dar al-Mulk or Home of the Kingdom between the imperial city and the old city of Fustat, emphasizing his distance from the caliph while ruling absolutely in his name.

The glory which for ten years he actively sought as the Sword of the Imam nevertheless eluded him. The death of the great Seljuq sultan Malikshah at the end of 1092 precipitated precisely the kind of succession crisis which even at the death of Mustansir the Fatimids avoided. In 1093 Tutush left Damascus to fight for the throne of his family's loose empire, and in 1095 fell in battle; Seljuq Syria was left divided between his rival sons, Ridwan at Aleppo and Duqaq at Damascus, with Antioch under the *ghulam* Yaghisiyan, and Ilghazi and Sukman ibn Urtuq at Jerusalem. Al-Afdal, at the head of a reconstituted state and army, was well placed to exploit their divisions and aspire to the reconquest of the country for the dynasty he represented, especially since the Turks were thrown into confusion in 1097–8 by the victorious advance of the First Crusade across Anatolia to the siege and capture of Antioch. His offer of an alliance rejected by the Franks, he nevertheless besieged Jerusalem in the summer of 1098, expelling the Urtuqids and celebrating his triumph at Ascalon, where he enshrined the sacred head of Husayn, second son of ‘Ali and ancestor of the Fatimids, martyred in 680 and revered throughout Islam. The celebration heralded the attempt of the Fatimids in the twelfth century to renew their appeal to the Muslim world on the strength of their descent from ‘Ali rather than their controversial imamate. It was al-Afdal's misfortune that the crusaders were in fact bent on the city, and that the speed with which they advanced from Tripoli past the Fatimid cities of the coast left him no time to bring his army back from Egypt before Jerusalem fell to their assault. To add insult to injury, he and his host were promptly attacked and routed by the crusaders at Ascalon. Al-Afdal retired ingloriously to Cairo, never again to campaign in person.⁹²

The First Crusade, originating in the appeal of Byzantium for help against the Turks, was the final repercussion of the coming of the Seljuqs, and the opposition which they represented to the Buyids and the Fatimids. Entering the cockpit of the Near East in the aftermath of the great conflict, the crusaders found in Syria a land reverting to the grass roots of castles, cities and diverse communities, to whose number they swiftly added. It was many years before the common Christian action to which the crusaders remained committed, in spite of their quarrels with each other and their pacts with their Muslim neighbours, was reflected in a similar commitment by the Syrians, and parochialism was

⁹² See Runciman (1951–4), 1, pp. 229–30, 275ff; Brett (1995b).

once again overshadowed by imperialism and ideology. The shape of things to come was nevertheless adumbrated at the very beginning of the century by al-Afdal, who over the six years following the creation of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, campaigned almost annually against its growing power. The three battles of Ramla, 1101–5, were close-run but inconsequential, in Runciman's view, since although 'the resources of Egypt were enormous' and its armies vast, their quality was poor and their leadership incompetent.⁹³ Hamblin regards the encounters favourably as attempts by smaller, well-trained forces to relieve the pressure on the Fatimid cities of the coast, such as Acre, which fell in 1104. These attempts failed because, as in 1099, it took so long to bring such forces up from Egypt in response to the crusaders' attacks. They were abandoned either when the cities themselves fell or when it was decided to supply them by sea.⁹⁴ Thus Tripoli under the Banu 'Ammar held out until 1109, Sidon till 1110 and Tyre until 1124, while Egypt fell back on the defensive behind the frontier fortress of Ascalon. But the overtures evidently made by al-Afdal to Damascus, to the Seljuq prince Duqaq and to the *atabeg* Tughtigin who succeeded him in 1104, which resulted in a Seljuq contingent at the third battle of Ramla in 1105, strongly suggest that the war that al-Afdal effectively waged for six years was indeed a holy war upon the infidel, in which he represented himself as the champion of Islam and the leader of a united Muslim front. His failure may have entailed the consolidation of the Latin kingdom, cutting the Fatimids off from their Syrian stamping-ground, and reducing them to an Egyptian dynasty; but the success of the crusaders had opened up a new perspective, not only for their caliphate but for government in Islam as a whole.⁹⁵

The war failed at least partly because the resources of Egypt were *not* enormous. In 1107–8, after the end of the war and some thirty years after Badr al-Jamali's initial allocation of the land tax farms as *iqta's* to his troops, their value was reviewed in the light of complaints from the treasury that the yield of the farms allocated to the higher ranks was higher than their assessment, and complaints from the lesser ranks that the yield of their farms was less, so that while some *muqta's* (or tenants) paid too little, some paid too much. The farms were thus redistributed, some at auction, to bring their assessment into line with their actual yield, and the results were confirmed for a further thirty years. It would appear that while some of the land had been successfully brought back into production after the great *shidda*, some had not, because the peasant population was still too small to cultivate the whole of the Valley and Delta; for many farms, the troops bid low or not at all, leaving much good land on the treasury's hands. The situation revealed by the Afdali survey may

⁹³ Runciman (1951–4), II, pp. 74–80, 89–90.

⁹⁴ Hamblin (1987), pp. 294–301.

⁹⁵ See Brett (1995b); and Lambton (1981).

have become even worse when al-Ma'mun al-Bata'ihī, the officer responsible for the reallocation in 1107–8, became wazir himself in 1121, to find that much of the land tax was in arrears, and, moreover, that tax farmers and peasants alike had converted much of the land illegally into personal property on which they grew summer crops such as sugarcane by means of artificial irrigation. Frustrated, but presumably unable to break the thirty-year military contracts, the treasury had meanwhile resorted to auctioning (other?) tax farms, covering bathhouses, bridges and the like, to the highest bidder before the previous contract had expired. The wazir could do little except forbid the practice, and meanwhile remit all arrears on condition that payment would be made in future; land newly brought under cultivation would be exempt from tax for three years.⁹⁶ To this unhappy picture of shrunken agricultural revenues must be added the loss of Acre and the commercial revenues of the Palestine littoral.

Al-Afdal was sufficiently concerned with the administration to create in 1107–8 a new office, the *diwan al-tahqiq* or office of inquiry into the affairs of the various financial departments, which under its director Ibn Abi 'l-Layth al-Nasrani, the Christian, became central to the administration. The fleet, repeatedly employed in operations in support of the remaining cities of the Syrian coast, must have been a heavy expense, as was the need to garrison Ascalon, from which occasional raids were made into the Latin Kingdom. In reply, Egypt was invaded and Farama sacked by King Baldwin I in 1118. But the real danger to al-Afdal came not from Jerusalem but from within. In 1121 the ageing wazir was murdered in the street. The finger of suspicion pointed variously at his wazir or lieutenant al-Ma'mun al-Bata'ihī: at the caliph al-Amir, now a man; and at the Iranian Isma'ilis who had left the fold in 1094 in the name of Nizar.

THE ORDER OF ASSASSINS

Both al-Bata'ihī and al-Amir benefited from the great man's murder, the caliph from the treasure he recovered from al-Afdal's residences, the Dar al-Mulk outside and the Dar al-Wizara inside al-Qahira, and al-Bata'ihī from his appointment as wazir, with all the titles of his predecessor. Their coup, if coup it was,⁹⁷ transformed the political scene. The caliph was brought out of his seclusion with elaborate public ceremonies, through which the new wazir endeavoured to establish himself as the indispensable agent of the monarchy, while taking control of the administration and army.⁹⁸ Such ceremonies were no longer

⁹⁶ See Brett (1984) and (1995a). ⁹⁷ See Ladak (1971).

⁹⁸ See Sanders (1989), with ref. to *idem* (1994).

specifically Isma'ili; ironically, as the servant of the Isma'ili imam, al-Bata'ihī in fact strove to prevent the entry into Egypt of those Persian and Syrian Isma'ilis who might assassinate his master as they were accused of murdering al-Afdal. Al-Amir himself was more particularly concerned to heal the rift opened up by the succession of Musta'li in 1094. As imam, he had the unquestioned support of the Isma'ilis of the Yemen under the rule of the Sulayhids, and specifically under their long-lived queen, al-Sayyida Arwa, 1075–1138, who began life as a consort and ended as the supreme representative of the imamate in the country. The relationship had been close since the days of al-Yazuri and al-Shirazi. 'Ali al-Sulayhi, the founder of the dynasty, had achieved the conquest of the Yemen with the occupation of Zabid on the Red Sea coastal plain in 1060 and Aden in 1062. As Egypt moved towards *fitna* and *shidda*, 'Ali himself aspired to the domination of Mecca, but was murdered in 1067, when the prospect of a great Arabian empire evaporated. Sa'da in the north was recovered by the rival 'Alid Zaydi imams, and the Sulayhids, together with the Zuray'ids whom they installed at Aden in 1083, became a provincial dynasty who needed the Fatimid connection as much as the Fatimids, in their darkest hour, needed them. It was in her capacity as *hujja* or proof of the imam that Sayyida presided for so long over so difficult and diverse a country, staunchly supporting the Musta'lian succession, and overseeing the creation of a major tradition of Isma'ili scholarship rooted in the writings of the *qadi* al-Nu'man on the *zahir* or open doctrine of the imamate and the Law, and of al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din al-Shirazi on the *batin* or 'hidden' cosmological doctrine of the imam. The teachings of this tradition, which preserved those of the Fatimid *da'wa* at its zenith in the mid-eleventh century, were in stark contrast to those of the Iranians. In seeking to reintegrate these Iranian secessionists by persuading them of the truth of Mustansir's designation of his father Ahmad as the next imam, Amir was appealing in vain to a movement established well before the overt schism, furnished with its own highly developed creed, and actively hostile to him.⁹⁹

Isma'ilism in the Iranian world had flourished despite the Ghaznavids and the Seljuqs, whose great wazir, Nizam al-Mulk, in the service of both Alp Arslan and Malikshah, had patronized the development of an explicitly orthodox, Sunni scholarship through the foundation of *madrasas* or colleges called in his honour Nizamiyyas, of which the first was at Baghdad in 1067. The Fatimid *Da'wa*, headed for twenty years by the Iranian al-Shirazi, continued to base itself at Isfahan, the Seljuq capital, with representatives at Shiraz and Rayy, the old Buyid capitals. It was at Rayy around 1070 that Hasan-i Sabbah was apparently converted from Twelver Shi'ism to Isma'ilism, yet another success for the determined proselytization of the Buyid dominions from Cairo over the

⁹⁹ See Stern (1950), and in (1984).

previous century. Promoted by Ibn ‘Attash, the *da‘i* at Isfahan, he went to Egypt in 1078, returning to Iran in 1081. The death of the great al-Shirazi in 1078, and the assumption of the post of chief *da‘i* by the wholly unqualified Badr al-Jamali, may have been the turning-point in the growth of an Iranian Isma‘ilism away from direction by Cairo towards independence in both organization and doctrine, of which Hasan took command. In 1090 he declared his mission openly with the seizure of Alamut, a mountain fortress in that historic home of militant Shi‘ism, the region of Daylam to the south of the Caspian. The Isma‘ilis of Kuhistan in eastern Iran responded with the seizure of several citadels; and when the Seljuq forces retreated at the death of Nizam al-Mulk and Malikshah in 1092, Hasan’s followers went on to seize Lamasar and others in the Rudbar district of Daylam; Girdkuh in the eastern Elburz; and points in the southern Zagros as the Seljuq succession crisis worsened and widened. By 1100 Ibn ‘Attash’s son Ahmad, who had inherited much of his father’s authority, was in possession of the fortress of Shahdiz outside Isfahan.

From strongholds such as these, the newly militant Isma‘ilis, who have become known in western historiography as the ‘Assassins’, struck at the Seljuqs and especially their ministers through assassination, although they were not averse to a convenient alliance, or to attacks on the supporters of one prince rather than another. Such terrorism, which famously claimed the life of the great Seljuq wazir Nizam al-Mulk in 1092, induced the fear of a sinister underground, and provoked the massacre of Isma‘ilis, real and imagined, at Isfahan and elsewhere; it discredited a movement which seems partly nationalist, in that it was anti-Turk; partly anti-clerical, in that it was hostile to the Sunni establishment; and partly socialist, in that it was egalitarian; but which was first and foremost millenarian in anticipating a new and final dispensation by revolutionary action. When Muhammad Tapar succeeded to the Seljuq sultanate in 1105, and a concerted effort against the Isma‘ilis was undertaken, these were forced on to the defensive with the capture of Shahdiz and the killing of Ahmad-i ‘Attash in 1107, the loss of the fortresses in the Zagros, and advances into Daylam culminating in the abortive siege of Alamut itself in 1118. The Isma‘ili revolution, if that is what it had been, had come to nothing; but the Isma‘ili state remained at Alamut, Girdkuh and in Kuhistan under the autocracy of Hasan-i Sabbah, the undisputed representative of the Hidden Imam Nizar. It was futile to expect him to abjure the foundation of his lifetime’s authority and power.¹⁰⁰

It was all the more futile since that authority was grounded in a doctrine which superseded the teachings of the Fatimid *da‘wa*, with their panoply of

¹⁰⁰ For Hasan-i Sabbah and Nizari Isma‘ilism, see Hodgson (1955) and (1968); Lewis (1967), pp. 324–434.

arguments for the necessity of the infallible imam as the linchpin of the relationship of heaven to earth, whether by revelation or by reason. All such proofs of his infallibility were deemed by Hasan to fail, since they supposed a higher infallibility on behalf of the evidence and ultimately of the believer who judged of its credibility. Logically, the imam could only be known by his absence, when his existence and identity would become self-evident to the seeker who knew only that he did not know. The doctrine which sprang from this ontological argument, the *da'wa jadida* or 'new preaching', required none of the *ta'lim* or teaching of the old doctrine, which it was the responsibility of the Fatimid imam and his *da'wa* to impart to humanity. *Ta'lim* now meant command, and by definition required unquestioning acceptance and obedience from the followers of the imam or his representative on earth – a striking thesis upon which the discipline of the new sect was based, and from which it took the soubriquet of *Ta'limiyya*. Alternatively it was called the *Batiniyya*, once again from the old 'hidden' doctrine of the Fatimids, now redefined as belief in the imam as the absolute source of divine guidance. Both appellations became names of fear, evoking the obedience and secrecy of the *fida'iyyun*, the 'fedayeen' or 'self-sacrificers' who carried out their assassinations in public, at the risk of almost certain death. But the significance of the *da'wa jadida* extended far beyond the revolutionary activities of Hasan-i Sabbah's followers to the doctrines of Islam itself in the works of al-Ghazali, the so-called Mujaddid or Reviver of Islam at the beginning of the sixth century of the Hijra. Al-Ghazali was appointed to teach at the Nizamiyya of Baghdad in 1091, as a polemicist against all such heresy, although in 1095 he abandoned the post for the life of a wandering ascetic. Challenged by the *da'wa jadida* to refute the doctrine of the self-evident imam, he did so by proposing the self-evidence of the Qur'an and the Prophet through whom it had been revealed, turning the scripture into the perennial source of divine illumination that needed no proof besides itself.¹⁰¹ Like the *da'wa jadida*, his work represented an attack on the Greek philosophical tradition in Islam, subordinating reason to revelation, and substituting meditation for metaphysical inquiry. Unlike the *da'wa jadida*, it did not dispense with the obligations of ritual prescribed by the Sunna, but regarded them as a necessary form of spiritual discipline.¹⁰² Nevertheless it served to raise the definition of Sunnism from the level of jurisprudence in which it was grounded, and at which it had been attacked by the Fatimids, to the level of theology as a definition of faith.

Although the Isma'ilis of Alamut were driven on to the defensive in Iran after 1105, their action in Syria developed over a longer period of time with

¹⁰¹ See al-Ghazali, *Al-Munqidh min al-dalal* (1939), p. 132; trans. Watt (1953), pp. 60, *et passim*.

¹⁰² See Watt (1953), pp. 86–152.

the sympathy of Syrian Isma‘ilis and the complicity of the Seljuq princes. It began in 1103 with the assassination of the amir of Homs, an enemy of Ridwan at Aleppo, who had allowed the Iranian missionaries of Hasan-i Sabbah to install themselves in the city with its large Shi‘ite population. If their aim was revolution, however, it was frustrated by the heterogeneity of the country. As in Iran, the immediate objective of these Hashishiyun or Assassins, as they came to be known in Syria,¹⁰³ was to obtain their own fortress or fortresses, beginning with Afamiya, which they briefly held in 1106. Meanwhile they played a colourful role in Syrian affairs, adding to the complexity of local politics, and guarding against the prospect of intervention from the east by the assassinations of the Seljuq *atabegs* of Mosul, Mawdud at Damascus in 1113 and Bursuqi at Mosul itself in 1126. They were expelled from Aleppo after the death of Ridwan in 1113, and again finally in 1124; however, they established themselves at Damascus under Tughtigin, and proceeded to occupy the castle of Banyas in the Upper Jordan valley until they were driven from both after the death of Tughtigin in 1128. Having revenged themselves upon Tughtigin’s successor Buri in 1131, they were sufficiently established in northern Syria to acquire a cluster of fortresses in the range between the Orontes and the sea from 1132 to 1141, of which the last and most important was Masyaf. In this mountain retreat they added to the patchwork of Syria at a time when, to the north, the threat from Mosul was growing with the annexation of Aleppo in 1128 and the conquest of Edessa in 1144 by the *atabeg* Zengi, followed by the occupation of Damascus by his son Nur al-Din in 1154. By the time their most celebrated *da‘i* Sinan, ‘the Old Man of the Mountain’, took command at Masyaf in 1162, the Assassins had been marginalized by the new hegemony of the Zengids.

Sinan had been sent from Alamut as an agent of the new ruler Hasan, who in 1162 succeeded to the headship of the Nizari community. Hasan-i Sabbah had died in 1124, to be succeeded by Buzurgumid, the commandant of the neighbouring castle of Lamasar, and no theologian. Under him and his son Muhammad, 1138–62, the Isma‘ili state became dynastic and while fighting off periodic attacks on Kuhistan and invasions of Rudbar settled as in Syria into the political life of the country; even the assassination of the ‘Abbasid caliph al-Mustarshid in 1135 may have been connived at by the Seljuq sultan of western Iran and Iraq, Mas‘ud, and the great sultan Sanjar in the east, as the caliph endeavoured to exploit the divisions within the Seljuq family by participating in its struggles for power. Muhammad’s son Hasan, however, abandoned their

¹⁰³ The origin of the term, from *hashish*, ‘grass’ or ‘hemp’, is unknown, but does not refer to the taking of drugs: cf. Lewis (1967), pp. 11–12; it is, on the other hand, the root of the term ‘assassin’, ‘assassination’.

more humble role of guardians of the faith to return to that of Hasan-i Sabbah as the *hujja* or proof of the imam of the time,¹⁰⁴ with the authority to speak in his name. In 1164 he proclaimed the *Qiyama* or resurrection in a ceremony which symbolized the emancipation of the faithful from the tyranny of the Law by inverting all its rituals, breaking the fast in the middle of Ramadan. While the faithful thus attained the enlightenment promised by the *da'wa jadida*, Hasan himself emerged as the *Qa'im*, 'He Who Arises', an apocalyptic figure identical with the mahdi and thus in effect with the imam in whose name he spoke. His own name became both a prayer and a title as Hasan '*ala dhikrihi*'-*l-salam*, 'upon the mention of whose name be peace'. In 1166 he was murdered for such blasphemy, but his son Muhammad maintained his doctrine until his own death in 1210. It was then repudiated, whether out of conviction or *taqiyya*, 'prudent hypocrisy', in favour of Sunnism, largely obscuring the doctrinal position of Alamut under Jalal al-Din (1210–21), 'Ala al-Din (1221–55) and Rukn al-Din, who surrendered to the Mongols in the following year. The *Qiyama*, however, survived the fall of the Isma'ili state to become the basis of Nizari Isma'ilism, as did the hereditary imamate. With Hasan '*ala dhikrihi*'-*l-salam* now unequivocally recognized as the true imam in line of descent from Nizar, the continuity of the apostolic succession to Muhammad and 'Ali was paradoxically reaffirmed on the original principle of transmission from father to son.

In Syria, under the renewed impulsion of the *Qiyama*, Sinan, the Old Man of the Mountain, ruled his state at Masyaf for over thirty years. A prominent feature of the political scene, Masyaf was an important factor in the calculations of the Zengids, the Ayyubids and the Latins down to the defeat of the Mongols at 'Ayn Jalut in 1260 and the creation of the Mamluk empire. Like the Latin kingdom, its independence was then neither tolerable nor tenable and by 1273 it had been suppressed, leaving the Nizaris of Syria to look to the imamate in Iran for spiritual guidance. The guidance in question was sectarian; the *Qiyama*, unlike the *da'wa jadida* from which it sprang, was for the few rather than the many. Yet it was not wholly peculiar. The sixth Islamic century opened by al-Ghazali rather than by his intellectual opponent Hasan-i Sabbah saw on the one hand the Almohad revolution in the Maghrib, the substitution of al-Ghazali's doctrine of the light of the Qur'an for the legalism of the Almoravids, which had characterized the Sunni opposition to the Fatimids in the middle of the fifth, and on the other, following the example of al-Ghazali, the rapid rise of Sufism or Islamic mysticism to the surface of Islam as a form of enlightenment under the direction of a spiritual guide. The failure of the *da'wa jadida* at Alamut to generate a revolutionary movement to compare

¹⁰⁴ See Hodgson (1955), pp. 66–7.

with that of the Almohad mahdi Ibn Tumart led the successors of Hasan-i Sabbah into a doctrine of spiritual resurrection to compare with the ‘taste of God’, the spiritual illumination sought by al-Ghazali himself and by the great Ibn al-‘Arabi.¹⁰⁵ The teaching that set the Nizaris apart as a community made them otherwise typical of the Islam of their time.

THE LAST OF THE FATIMIDS

Such beliefs were alien to those upheld in principle by the Fatimid imam and caliph al-Amir, and in practice by his followers in the Yemen. In emphasizing his caliphate rather than his imamate as the heir of ‘Ali, al-Amir was in fact moving beyond the old doctrines of the dynasty in quite a different way to legitimize the power which he finally resumed in 1125. In that year, he had the wazir al-Bata’ihi arrested and eventually executed on suspicion of a plot against his life and took back the control of affairs which had been abandoned or lost by the monarch since the death of Hakim a hundred years before. It was a testimony to the enduring strength of a dynasty which had retained not only its ultimate authority but its residual powers throughout the rule of its state by its servants. Continuing al-Afdal’s policy of rapprochement with the Seljuqs, he sent presents to Bursuqi, the *atabeg* of Mosul, in the year in which he fell victim to the Assassins, and received in return the head of the *da’i* Bahram when the Nizaris were evicted by Buri from Damascus and Banyas. At home, he dispensed with a wazir, employing the Christian Abu Najah to increase his revenues until he sacrificed him to the fury of his victims, high and low. He is portrayed as a greedy tyrant, not the statesman to refound the monarchy, but he was nevertheless unchallenged until he himself was murdered in 1130, apparently by the Assassins but possibly by his henchmen Hazarmard and Barghash, shortly after the birth of a son, Muhammad. These elevated his cousin ‘Abd al-Majid to the position of wali ‘Ahd al-muslimin, the lesser title of the heir apparent, which Hakim had once bestowed upon his nephew Ibn Ilyas. The infant Muhammad disappeared. In the confusion that followed, the wazirate was restored by al-Afdal’s son, Ahmad al-Kutayfat (‘Little Shoulders’) at the head of his father’s faction in the army, who ruled first in the name of ‘Abd al-Majid and then in the name of Muhammad al-Muntazar, the Hidden Imam of the Twelvers, until he was killed by the loyal Armenian Yanis in 1131. ‘Abd al-Majid was then restored to the throne as imam and caliph with the title *al-Hafiz li-Din Allah*, ‘Keeper of God’s Creed’.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ See *ibid.*, pp. 180–2, and *idem* (1968), pp. 463–6.

¹⁰⁶ See Ladak (1971) and Stern (1951), and in (1984).

The accession of Hafiz to the imamate prompted the secession of the Yemeni *da'wa*, which had acknowledged the infant Muhammad as al-Amir's heir and would not for the most part accept the irregular succession of his cousin. Muhammad, called al-Tayyib, 'the Good', was deemed to have survived, and subsequently believed to have fathered a line of Hidden Imams in *satr* or concealment, who were represented in the community by a dynasty of *da'is* with complete authority to speak on their behalf. The decision to reject the succession of al-Hafiz, which gave the Yemenis, like the Iranians, their independence as a sect, was the last achievement of Sayyida before her death in 1138 put an end to the Sulayhid dynasty and its power over central Yemen. While the affiliated dynasties of the Hamdanids of Sana'a and the Zuray'ids of Aden clung to power on the strength of their continued loyalty to the Fatimid al-Hafiz and his successors, down to the Ayyubid conquest of the Yemen which began in 1174, the majority of Isma'ilis in the country abandoned the political for the religious leadership of the Tayyibi *da'wa*. Unlike the Nizaris, the Tayyibis retained the original emphasis of the Fatimids on the observation of the Law, as well as a cosmogony derived from al-Shirazi, which became still more elaborate. The new sect extended into India, where Isma'ilism had revived after the Ghaznavid purge as a result of the Sulayhids' missionary activity and where Gujerat eventually became its chief centre.

In Egypt itself, the violent deaths within ten years of three commanders of the armies and the caliph himself threatened a return to the days of the *fitna* in the absence of a single leader able to dominate both the army and the palace. The system nevertheless survived along with the Hafizi succession and along with the newfound ability of the monarchy to play an active role in government. This was partly because the monarchy was now more necessary than ever to the rivalries of its servants, and partly because of the caliph himself. Twenty years older than al-Amir, al-Hafiz had the determination and ability to rule as well as reign, despite the ambitions of his sons and his generals. Twin poles of power thus emerged in the state, on the one hand the palace, where the caliph was defended by his household guards and a corps of several thousand black infantry, and on the other hand the field army of Armenians, Turks and Arabs under the command of the provincial governors created by Badr al-Jamali, who vied with each other for the position of wazir. The troops themselves were mutinous, helping to prevent the clear victory of any one contender for supremacy. In the course of his long reign, al-Hafiz faced three major crises: the rebellion and execution of his son Hasan in 1134 at the demand of the black soldiery; the rebellion of the governor of al-Gharbiyya, Ridwan ibn al-Walakhshi, against the Christian wazir Bahram in 1137, followed by Ridwan's two-year reign as wazir with the title of *malik*, 'king'; and finally the fighting between the black regiments in 1149, in the midst of which the caliph

died. Despite such interruptions, his government survived, and during the ten years after the overthrow of Ridwan, when he himself ruled through the amir Ibn Masal, was even constructive.

The cult of ‘Ali and the ‘Alid saints was developed as the caliph made a virtue out of the vice of his succession, by claiming that he had succeeded al-Amir as ‘Ali had succeeded the Prophet before ever the principle of descent of the imamate from father to son had been established.¹⁰⁷ In the same way, the ceremonial routine devised for al-Amir by al-Ma’mun al-Bata’ihi was continued, with the elaborate military hierarchy of the court as described by the contemporary Ibn al-Tuwayr.¹⁰⁸ Ibn al-Tuwayr likewise described the administrative practice which so impressed al-Hafiz’s fellow-monarch Roger II of Sicily,¹⁰⁹ documents of which have survived from the monastery of St Catherine in Sinai.¹¹⁰ Underlying such procedures is likely to have been a further revision of the *iqta’* system established by Badr al-Jamali and al-Afdal, some thirty years after the survey of 1107–8, when the contracts issued by al-Bata’ihi should have expired. The evidence is provided by al-Makhzumi, who like Ibn al-Tuwayr produced his account of past Fatimid practice for the benefit of the new ruler Saladin, including a description of the Fatimid *iqta’* which purports to refer to the period preceding Saladin’s arrival in 1169. According to al-Makhzumi, the soldier had been paid at a fixed rate by the treasury out of the tax upon his *iqta’*, rather than paying the tax and keeping the excess, as he evidently did under al-Afdal’s regime. In the middle of the twelfth century, the *muqta’* (or holder of the grant) nevertheless remained quite clearly the tax farmer responsible for the cultivation of the land and the production of its revenue to the fisc. As a solution to the problems apparent in 1107–8 and again in 1121–2, this bears witness to a high degree of central control, which is reflected in the other arrangements described by al-Makhzumi for the pay of tribal Arab forces, and troops in garrisons. Together they suggest a satisfactory reform of the financial system following the excesses of Abu Najah during al-Amir’s personal rule. The state in Egypt was far from breaking down under the strain of disorder, but continuing to evolve as a powerful administrative machine.¹¹¹

Following the death of Hafiz and the accession of his youngest son al-Zafir, disorder at the top nevertheless turned finally to *fitna* or civil war as the monarchs became mere figureheads, and the provincial governors fought each other and the palace for the wazirate. Ibn Masal, the able lieutenant of Hafiz, was immediately swept aside and killed in the rebellion of Ibn al-Salar, the Kurdish governor of Alexandria, who followed the example of Ridwan in

¹⁰⁷ See Sanders (1992); Williams (1983, 1985).

¹⁰⁸ Quoted by al-Qalqashandi (d. 1418), trans. Lewis (1974), I, pp. 201–8.

¹⁰⁹ See Johns (1993).

¹¹⁰ Published in *Fatimid Decrees*. ¹¹¹ See Brett (1995a).

assuming the title of *malik*. Three years later, however, Ibn al-Salar was murdered in a conspiracy between the caliph and the amir 'Abbas ibn Tamim, who as wazir had al-Zafir himself murdered in 1154, and the five-year-old al-Fa'iz proclaimed. 'Abbas was promptly expelled by Tala'i' b. Ruzzik, the Armenian governor of Asyut or Middle Egypt, who ruled for seven years, replacing al-Fa'iz at his death in 1160 with his nine-year-old cousin al-'Adid. But in 1161 he too was murdered from within the palace, and his son Ruzzik, who succeeded him, was overthrown and put to death in 1163 by the Arab governor of Qus or Upper Egypt, Shawar. Shawar himself was at once driven out by Ibn Ruzzik's Arab general Dirgham, and fled to Damascus to seek the aid of Nur al-Din. The affairs of Cairo thus became a matter of concern not only to Damascus, but also Jerusalem, with consequences fatal to the dynasty.

Throughout the reign of Hafiz, as the power of Zengi and his son Nur al-Din grew in northern Syria, and a united Muslim front against the Latin states began to develop, Cairo had abandoned the approach of al-Amir to the Syrian princes, and contented itself with a strong garrison at Ascalon to keep the frontier. With the Franks threatening an attack upon Ascalon from Gaza, however, the approach was renewed by Ibn al-Salar. Ascalon was in fact lost to a determined attack by King Baldwin in the aftermath of the *malik's* murder in 1153. Its capture was not, however, followed up. After a victory at Gaza obtained by his commander Dirgham, Tala'i' ibn Ruzzik wrote again to Nur al-Din, whose occupation of Damascus in 1154 had completed the formation of the Zengid empire in Iraq and Syria, once more to little purpose. In 1160 he bought off a threatened Frankish invasion of Egypt with the promise of an annual tribute, whose non-payment became the excuse for an attack by the new King Amalric upon the new *malik* Dirgham in 1163. Dirgham cut the dykes to flood the king out of the siege of Farama, only to be attacked in the following year from Damascus by his deposed rival Shawar with an army led by Nur al-Din's Kurdish general Shirkuh. Dirgham appealed to Amalric for aid, but was defeated and killed before any could be sent. When Shawar promptly renewed the appeal to Jerusalem to rid himself of his Syrian ally, however, Amalric forced Shirkuh to retire. A similarly inconclusive campaign followed in 1167, when Shirkuh, with Nur al-Din's permission, set out to conquer the country, but again was thwarted by the Franks whom Shawar had summoned. In 1168 the aggressor was Amalric, and it was Shirkuh who obliged the army of Jerusalem to retire. Shirkuh's victory proved decisive. Shawar was executed and Shirkuh appointed in his place, to be succeeded after his sudden death in March 1169 by his nephew Saladin with the title *al-Malik al-Nasir*, 'Victorious King'. Yet another ineffective invasion by the Franks in conjunction with the Byzantine fleet was repelled at the end of the year, leaving the new wazir in full, if still precarious, possession.

The motive for what Lane-Poole called this ‘race for the Nile’¹¹² was partly strategic, in that neither Jerusalem nor Damascus could afford to see Egypt in the hands of the other; partly economic, in that the country was a source of wealth to relieve the pressures on the limited resources of the antagonists in Palestine and Syria; and partly personal, in that Shirkuh in particular had the ambition to make his military and political fortune. As far as Saladin was concerned, he was obliged to succeed or perish, moving to take command of his uncle’s forces on the one hand, and on the other to neutralize the palace by destroying the black regiments who maintained its independence and its capacity for intrigue. More important still was the imperative to rise above both his troops and the dynasty as a figure in his own right. Putting an end to the ceremonial round of the caliphate, which had sustained the Fatimids since the murder of al-Afdal, Saladin took advantage of the sickness and death of al-‘Adid in September 1171 to terminate the caliphate by refusing to proclaim a successor. Instead, in his capacity as *malik* or king, he offered his allegiance to the caliph of Baghdad. The royal family was left helpless in the seclusion to which it was accustomed, while the males were apparently separated from the women to ensure that the line died out. Such an accumulation of power, prestige and wealth, all within the space of two and a half years, meanwhile gave Saladin his effective independence from his original master Nur al-Din in Damascus. As ruler of Egypt, he was able to attract the necessary number of warriors into his service; to keep them with the grant of *iqta’*s; and to employ them as the Seljuqs had always done, to create a fresh empire for himself and his immediate family. Thus in 1174 his brother Turan shah was dispatched by way of Mecca to the conquest of the Yemen. In that same year, the death of Nur al-Din gave Saladin the opportunity finally to establish his monarchy and his dynasty with the occupation of Damascus.¹¹³

In this way, the political logic of Saladin’s position in Egypt combined with the logic of the Fatimid state to complete the work begun by Nasir al-Dawla and Badr al-Jamali a hundred years before, converting the commander of the armies into the wazir, and the wazir or *malik* into a sultan, the independent founder of a new, Ayyubid, Dawla or dynastic state. While the charisma of the Fatimids was spent, their patrimony nevertheless remained intact, to serve as the basis of the patriarchal regime of Saladin and his kinsfolk in Egypt, Syria and the Yemen, and subsequently of the institutionalized empire of the Mamluk sultanate. It did so through the Fatimid *iqta’*, the tax farm whose revenues were divided between the soldier and the state in various ways, until eventually the Mamluk *faris* or cavalier was assigned the income from a variety of specified taxes levied on his villagers as his fixed

¹¹² Lane-Poole (1914), p. 179.

¹¹³ See Lyons and Jackson (1982), chs. 2–6.

reward.¹¹⁴ The cancellation by Saladin of the *iqtaʿ*s of the Fatimid troops and their allocation to his own followers, on terms that are admittedly obscure, contributed to a brief pro-Fatimid revolt in 1174, but began the transformation of his Turkish and Kurdish warbands from conquistadors into the regular Egyptian army they eventually became.¹¹⁵ In that longer perspective, the Mamluk warriors who completed the transformation with the establishment of their own monarchy in 1250 were the true successors of the Fatimids in the last century of their reign.

¹¹⁴ See Rabie (1972), pp. 41, 57, 64, 132.

¹¹⁵ See Gibb (1962), pp. 74–90.

ZENGIDS, AYYUBIDS AND SELJUQS

Stephen Humphreys

FOR thirty years, from the moment he was made chief minister in 1063 by the sultan Alp Arslan (regn. 1063–72), Nizam al-Mulk devoted every effort to shaping the jerry-built Seljuqid political enterprise into a centralized absolutist monarchy. By the late 1080s, he could claim considerable success, for the sultan whom he now served (Malikshah, regn. 1072–92) enjoyed uncontested authority from the Oxus to the Mediterranean. After an initial succession struggle between Malikshah and his uncle Qavurd, there were no further disruptions which seriously threatened Malikshah's supremacy. Nizam al-Mulk had created an administrative machinery which allowed him to maintain a fairly effective control over the flow of revenues and information. It is clear that he wanted to penetrate the whole apparatus with a network of informers and security agents, though it is not clear that he was able to achieve this goal. In any case, he dispersed his relatives and protégés everywhere he could, and even the most powerful officials in the remotest places had good reason to think that they were being watched.¹

Nizam al-Mulk could only use the tools available to him in the world of eleventh-century Iran and Iraq, of course. For example, he would have preferred to build a tax system based on salaried officials, but fiscal reality compelled him to make wide use of the *iqta'*. Even so, he strove to maintain a close supervision over these *iqta'*s and to limit the powers which their holders could exercise over the villages assigned to them. By this time, Seljuqid military power was based increasingly on a standing 'professional' army – an army whose members were registered by name, paid regular stipends and (in principle) subject to muster as needed. In these regular forces Turkish slave recruits (*ghulam*, *mamluk*) from central Asia played a central role, but there were also soldiers, both slave recruits

¹ Nizam al-Mulk has left us a superb statement of his programme: *Siyasat-nameh*. Nizam al-Mulk envisions an ideal order, but his frank critiques of current practice tell us much about the realities of his day. On the Seljuqid vizierate, see Horst (1964); Klausner (1973); Lambton (1968), esp. pp. 247–68, and (1988), ch. 1.

and free mercenaries, drawn from many other ethnic groups. In addition, the dynasty continued to rely heavily on the nomadic Turcoman tribesmen who had brought it to power a half-century before, but these were increasingly treated as auxiliaries. The tribal chiefs received regular subsidies to ensure their loyalty to the regime, and their followers were recruited and paid on an *ad hoc* basis for particular campaigns.²

Nizam al-Mulk's unremitting labours led to the emergence of the best-integrated and most effectively governed large state which the Muslim world had seen since the death of the 'Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil (847–861) two centuries before. Even so, he was only able to mask or mitigate the stresses and fracture lines which threatened the great edifice. To begin with, he was never able to eliminate the confederative character of the Seljuqid polity. Like so many dynasties in the eastern Islamic world between 900 and 1500, the Seljuqids always assumed that political authority should be shared among the leading princes of the ruling family.³ This sharing was typically carried out by carving the empire into a group of territorial appanages, each assigned on a more or less hereditary basis to a sub-lineage within the ruling house. An empire of this sort was thus not a unitary state but a confederation, held together chiefly by the charisma of its founder and solidarity among the members of the ruling family. The largest and richest appanage would be held by the senior prince of the family. (Under the Seljuqids the senior prince typically took the title of *sultan mu'azzam*, 'supreme sultan'; the other princes settled for the more modest titles of *sultan*, *malik*, or *amir*.) The senior prince's authority rested in part on the material resources provided by his appanage, but even more on his place within the ruling family: a man who was the father of the other princes could normally get his way, while a mere older brother or nephew had to expect considerable opposition. On a formal level, the senior prince's authority over his colleagues was real but limited. He rarely chose the other appanage princes, but he did formally invest them with their territories. He had the right (not always enforceable, to be sure) to demand their military and political support against rebels or external enemies. He seldom had the power to interfere in the internal affairs of the appanage princes, but his greater financial and military resources gave him a certain paramouncy within the confederation's affairs.

The problem with such family confederations was that they were based on custom and *ad hoc* improvisation. They were not shaped in accordance with any formally articulated principles or institutions. In his famous *Siyasat-nameh*

² The main studies of Seljuqid fiscal and military administration are by Lambton (1953), (1968), pp. 231–9, and (1988), chs. 3, 4, 6. See also Cahen (1953): old but still penetrating. On the origins of the *iqta'*, see most recently Sato (1997), chs. 1, 2.

³ This point was first made by Barthold (1968), p. 268; further discussion in Humphreys (1977b), pp. 66–75; see also Bosworth (1995), pp. 939–40.

Nizam al-Mulk does not deign to mention this mode of political organization. Contemporary chroniclers do recognize it, but only in passing; they never treat it discursively. The lack of explicit principles and institutions caused many problems. For example, there was no agreed-upon rule of succession; it was never clear whether rule should be transmitted to the oldest member of the family, to the brother of the previous ruler, or to his son. Hence every succession represented a political crisis and often led to outright warfare. In the final analysis, family confederations were glued together almost solely by loyalty and deference within the ruling house, and those qualities could evaporate in a moment.

Even as Nizam al-Mulk and Malikshah unified the empire, seeds of fragmentation were being sown.⁴ In 1078 Malikshah sent his brother Tutush to conquer Syria, but from the outset the latter's ambitions were not easy to restrain. Malikshah only kept him on a leash by his personal intervention in Syria on two occasions (1083, 1086–7), and by the device of assigning Aleppo to a second independent governor. In Iran, Malikshah's uncle Qavurd had been killed early in the former's reign when his thrust for the sultanate fell short; even so, his appanage of Kirman continued in his line without a break, and the region's autonomy was quickly recovered on Malikshah's death. Worst of all, Malikshah had four sons by different mothers, and by the late 1080s the dangers of a succession struggle manipulated by different palace and harem factions were already apparent. Thus the assassination of Malikshah's minister Nizam al-Mulk in 1092, and his own death shortly thereafter at the age of thirty-seven, assured a time of troubles.

One of Malikshah's widows put his youngest son Mahmud on the throne, but he had no chance against his older brothers Berk-Yaruk and Muhammad Tapar and was quickly shunted aside. A more serious contender was Malikshah's brother Tutush, by now the uncontested master of Syria; he was an experienced politician and soldier, and had a plausible claim to succeed his brother as the oldest male of the paramount lineage within the Seljuqid clan. Tutush's initial forays into Mesopotamia and Azerbaijan boded well, but in 1095 he fell in battle against the troops of Berk-Yaruk, and thereafter the struggle would be conducted exclusively among the sons of Malikshah. Berk-Yaruk (regn. 1094–1104) claimed the role of *sultan mu'azzam*, but his position was contested by his half-brother Muhammad Tapar until Berk-Yaruk's death of natural causes. At last a modicum of internal peace and stability was restored, and Muhammad Tapar (regn. 1105–18) was able to assert his authority as supreme sultan in Iraq and Iran relatively uncontested. Khurasan had been assigned by Berk-Yaruk as an

⁴ There is no book-length western-language study of the Seljuqid empire for the period after Malikshah; see Bosworth (1968), pp. 102–57, 167–84, and (1995).

appanage to his young half-brother Sanjar, and Muhammad Tapar found it expedient to leave him there. Sanjar would ultimately prove an able (and extremely durable) ruler, but during Muhammad Tapar's life he was content to remain under the latter's tutelage.

Though Muhammad Tapar had at last been successful in restoring peace within the ruling family, the structural flaws of the empire that he governed continued to deepen. Malikshah and Nizam al-Mulk had been able to restrict the size and autonomy of *iqta'* holdings; in effect, they had made them units of fiscal administration, subject to a substantial degree of oversight and control by the central ministries. However, the exigencies of the struggle for power had compelled both Muhammad Tapar and Berk-Yaruk to assign larger districts, sometimes whole provinces, in *iqta'*. In these, the *iqta'*-holder was (both in name and in fact) the governor. He would derive his personal revenues from only a portion of the province, but he exercised full governmental powers (taxation, justice, defence and public security) over the whole. In regard to such *iqta'*-governorships, the sultan's only effective means of control was his power to remove governors; the latter could be quite intransigent in the face of such demands, and it often required a major military expedition to enforce them. Indeed, the Seljuqid sultans normally led a migratory existence, as they moved from one city to the next with their household entourage, senior administrators and a substantial military contingent. They could only enforce their authority by being present and by demonstrating their capacity to use force against officials who would otherwise be free to do what they wanted.

Muhammad Tapar (and his successors to a markedly greater degree) also made increasing use of a second device for establishing a visible Seljuqid presence in the provinces. This was the institution of the *atabeg* (lit., 'father-prince', hence 'royal guardian').⁵ The *atabeg* was an ancient Turkish institution, whereby a young prince within the paramount clan would be assigned nominal authority over a district or people. Since the prince was too young to rule by himself, he was accompanied by a guardian who would teach him the art of government while administering affairs in his name. Although *atabegs* can be found in early Seljuqid times, the institution really began to flourish in the twelfth century. The sultan would try to retain his authority over a critical region by naming one of his sons, sometimes even an infant, as its governor; in that way, the sultan himself would be present not only symbolically but virtually in the flesh – or so it was hoped. The actual powers of government of course were assigned to an *atabeg*, who by this time was normally one of the sultan's *mamluks*. Everything depended on the loyalty and skill of the *atabeg*, of course; many carried out their duties strictly, but the mortality rate among young Seljuqid

⁵ On the *atabeg* (Ar., spelling *atabak*), see Cahen (1960a); Lambton (1968), pp. 239–44.

princes is suspiciously high. Ultimately (by the 1120s), the office and title of *atabeg* became quasi-hereditary, though the term was also still used in the traditional way down to the mid-thirteenth century. It sometimes became attached to the rulers of a particular city, even when no Seljuqid princes had resided there for decades, and likewise it could be passed on down from father to son. By the mid-twelfth century, the title of *atabeg* often meant only that one was an autonomous territorial ruler whose authority had its origins in the Seljuqid empire.

Muhammad Tapar was an effective and respected ruler, but like his father he died quite young, at the age of thirty-six, and left his empire to five young sons and his brother Sanjar. There was no question of displacing Sanjar, who had had thirteen years to consolidate his position in Khurasan and was far older and more experienced than his nephews. Indeed, he quickly made himself *sultan mu'azzam* and would hold that rank until his death in 1157. Iraq and western Iran remained in the hands of the sons of Muhammad Tapar – though they were now subordinate to Sanjar – and they would dominate the stage there for the next three decades. The oldest, Mahmud (regn. 1118–31), was the most powerful ruler in Iraq and western Iran, though he had to face constant rebellions and demands for autonomy from his four brothers (or, rather, since they were still young children, from the *atabegs* who guided them). He was never quite able to establish his authority in Azerbaijan, and Syria and Mesopotamia were only tenuously subject to him. He also had to deal with an ever more assertive 'Abbasid caliphate, which was no longer willing to be dominated by an obviously weakened Seljuqid regime. Mahmud had the better of this contest, but in the following decades the tide would turn and a small but increasingly prestigious caliphal state would reclaim a significant role in the politics of the Muslim world. Concessions in the form of *iqta's* and hereditary appanages to his brothers, their *atabegs*, and powerful amirs, which were necessary to maintain a viable basis of political support, inevitably weakened his control over his domains and sapped his fiscal resources.

Mahmud died very young, at the age of twenty-seven, and was succeeded as sultan in Iraq by his brother Mas'ud (regn. 1134–52). Mas'ud's long reign was not without achievements, but at bottom it was characterized by an intensification of all these trends: the sapping of the sultan's authority and resources, the rise of *atabegs* and amirs to a degree of power hardly inferior to the sultan's, and a resurgence of caliphal autonomy and prestige under the able and ambitious al-Muqtafi (regn. 1136–1160). After Mas'ud died, his successors were never able to re-enter Baghdad (the traditional capital of the western Seljuqids since Tughril Beg had occupied the city in 1055), and direct Seljuqid rule was more and more restricted to north-western Iran. Indeed, the Seljuqid sultans now fell under the domination of the powerful *atabegs* of this region. The last Seljuqid

of Iran, Tughril III (regn. 1176–94), struggled to liberate himself from these warlords and almost succeeded, but fell in battle against the rising power of the Khwarizm Shahs.

The decadence of Seljuqid power in western Iran after the death of Mas'ud coincided with the collapse of Seljuqid rule in the East. At the cost of unremitting labour, Sanjar maintained his authority in Khurasan and Transoxiana, but he was so preoccupied by affairs on his northern and eastern frontiers that, especially after 1130, he was unable to play the supreme sultan's traditional roles of arbiter and commander-in-chief within the empire as a whole. In 1141, even his authority in the east was dealt a severe blow when his forces suffered a crushing defeat at the Qatvan Steppe on the mid-Jaxartes River, at the hands of the Kara Khitay, a pagan nomadic people from the steppes north of China. Sanjar was forced to withdraw south and west of the Oxus River – and fortunately the Kara Khitay had no interest in following him. In spite of this blow, he was able to recover some authority over his remaining dominions. However, he found himself increasingly at loggerheads with the Turcomans of Khurasan; they belonged to his own ethnic group (the Ghuzz or Oğuz) and always recognized him as their sovereign, but at the instigation of his hard-pressed fiscal officials he mounted a series of punitive campaigns to subject them to regular taxation and supervision. These expeditions succeeded only in inciting a powerful revolt in 1153. Sanjar was defeated and taken prisoner, and he spent the next two years in humiliating captivity, as the Turcomans raided cities and agricultural districts throughout Khurasan. Even when he escaped in 1156, he was unable to rebuild his regime, and he died a homeless wanderer in 1157. With his death, the Seljuqid sultanate in eastern Iran disappeared. After some two decades of near-chaos, the region was absorbed within a new empire being erected by former Seljuqid governors in Khwarizm, the rich agricultural basin south of the Aral Sea. But the new Khwarizmian empire was founded more on momentum than on substance, and it was annihilated in the Mongol invasion of 1219–20.

Throughout the slow but inexorable disintegration of Seljuqid power, the crucial events occurred in Iraq, north-western Iran and Khurasan, which had in fact been the traditional focal points of political conflict and change in the Nile-to-Oxus region since the rise of Islam. In this great drama Syria – a term covering the eastern Mediterranean coastlands from Gaza to Antioch and the interior steppe west of the Euphrates from the Gulf of Aqaba to the Taurus mountains – played a very minor role. This is so even though Syria was an integral part of the Seljuqid political system and the struggle for power there was conducted according to Seljuqid rules. Syria's marginality is hardly surprising, since it was only a recently acquired frontier province when the time of troubles began after the death of Malikshah. It was too remote from the major centres

of Seljuqid power – Baghdad, Isfahan, Rayy, Marw – to be worth fighting over. Moreover, it possessed such slender resources of money and manpower that it could not serve as a serious power-base. Finally, it was fragmented into a varying number of petty city-states, each jealous and fearful of its neighbours, and none able to assert effective paramountcy over the others. But, ironically, as the Great Seljuqids went into an irreversible decline after the deaths of Mas'ud (1152) and Sanjar (1157), Syria began to acquire a centrality in the politics, economy and culture of the eastern Islamic world which it had not enjoyed since the fall of the Umayyads four centuries earlier. By the end of the twelfth century, it would be linked to Egypt as the core of an empire stretching from Lake Van in the north-east to Aswan and Yemen in the south. Though never a really wealthy region, it had come to enjoy a substantial prosperity. During this same half-century, finally, it emerged from a sleepy provincialism and became a dynamic and influential centre of Islamic religious and intellectual life.

The catalyst for the Syrian renaissance was surely the establishment of the crusader states at the beginning of the twelfth century. The crusades re-energized Syrian political life in at least two ways – both unintended by the crusaders, of course. First, they created a milieu in which an ideology of *jihad* – long dormant in a Syria far removed from the frontiers of the Islamic world – could flourish. Indeed, the crusaders' bloody conquest of Jerusalem in 1099 and their standing threat to every other Muslim city in Syria-Palestine almost compelled such a response. As the *jihad* idea evolved in twelfth-century Syria, it implied the need for Muslim cooperation to ward off the invaders, and ultimately for Muslim unity to expel them. In short, *jihad* against the crusaders legitimized political expansion and consolidation. In principle, the crusades made it possible for a local ruler to claim that his struggles against his rivals were not grounded in selfish ambition, but rather were essential for the vindication of Islam. All that was required was a ruler who knew how to visualize and execute such a policy. In the event several decades passed before the implications of the situation were fully grasped and an effective ideology of unity and *jihad* was articulated, but by the mid-1140s all the elements for such an ideology were at last in place.⁶

The second impact of the crusades was less immediately visible but no less important. The crusader conquest of Syria's port cities (effectively complete with the fall of Tyre in 1124) connected these to the rapidly expanding network of Mediterranean commerce which the Italian communes had begun to construct in the mid-eleventh century. The bulk of this commerce continued to flow through Constantinople and Alexandria, as it always had, but a significant proportion – perhaps ultimately as much as a third – was now directed to Acre,

⁶ On the evolution of the counter-crusade, Sivan (1968) remains the only comprehensive study.

Tyre and Antioch (the latter through its port of St Simeon/Suwaydiyya). In spite of political barriers, the interior cities, especially Damascus and Aleppo, inevitably became part of this network, and their role in it increased as the volume of trade increased throughout the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.⁷

It is impossible to quantify the overall economic impact of this commerce, but it is undeniable that Muslim Syria was a more prosperous place by the mid-twelfth century than it had been in the eleventh, or that it continued to flourish until the turmoil of the 1240s and 1250s. The direct fiscal implications of commercial growth are obvious; although most medieval Muslim regimes (like their European counterparts) relied chiefly on agricultural taxes or tax-equivalents, urban tariffs and excises were a very important part of their revenues. Muslim rulers in 1200 simply had more money than their predecessors to spend on their armies, on the construction and endowment of religious institutions, even on infrastructure (irrigation canals, caravanserais and so on). In one of those ironies that enliven the history of every age, the crusaders wound up financing the political and economic revitalization of their opponents. The growth of Mediterranean trade was of course not the whole cause of Muslim Syria's restored prosperity, but it was certainly a significant element in the process.

The processes sketched in the preceding paragraphs only slowly became visible, and they were surely hardly conceivable in 1095 when Tutush was killed trying to seize his brother Malikshah's legacy. Indeed, Tutush's unexpected death echoed Malikshah's in that it ushered in an uncontrolled scramble for power among his sons and officers, albeit within a far smaller domain. But whereas Muhammad Tapar was at last able to restore political cohesion within his vast domains in Iraq and Iran, there was nobody in Syria to play that role. Indeed, twenty years after Tutush's death the Seljuqid lineage in Syria was extinct, its possessions parcelled out among a motley collection of local warlords.

In the framework of a short chapter, it is almost impossible to tell a coherent story of Syrian politics until the late 1120s. Tutush was a heavy-handed ruler, but after the death of Malikshah he was at last able to bring all the interior districts of Syria, from Jerusalem in the south to the Taurus mountains in the north, under his direct authority. (The major port cities south of Latakia, such as Tripoli, Tyre, Acre, Jaffa and Ascalon, had never been subjected to Seljuqid rule. They remained nominally Fatimid possessions, though Tripoli and Tyre were effectively self-governing.) He had apparently made no plans for a succession, but in accordance with the almost universally held principle that his domains should be distributed among his family, Aleppo and Damascus fell to two different sons: the thirteen-year-old Ridwan in Aleppo (regn.

⁷ Heyd (1885–6); Schaube (1906); and Labib (1965) remain indispensable repositories of information.

1095–1113) and his somewhat younger half-brother Duqaq in Damascus (regn. 1095–1104).⁸

The transition to a divided principality was not smooth. The older son, Ridwan, initially tried to take direct control of all his father's lands, and, when that failed, to assert some degree of primacy within them. Though he was astute and tenacious, his military talents were modest and his resources exiguous, and these efforts were but delusions of petty grandeur. Jealous of his status and fearful, not always without reason, that his Muslim neighbours were bent on seizing his lands, he devoted the bulk of his reign to blocking every effort at unified action among them.

During his father's lifetime Ridwan had been under the tutelage of an *atabeg* (Janah al-Dawla Husayn, the governor of Homs), but he found this insupportable and quickly drove Janah al-Dawla from Aleppo. For the rest of his eighteen-year reign, he kept affairs in his own hands and suffered no opposition to his authority. He could be vindictive and brutal, but he knew how to find competent officials, and he faced no serious internal challenge during the last decade of his reign. When he died as the result of a hunting accident, the throne passed to his son Alp Arslan without contest. Unfortunately Alp Arslan possessed his father's vices but not his talents. He was assassinated in 1114 and replaced by his *atabeg*, the eunuch Lu'lu'. Lu'lu' was likewise not up to the task and was murdered in 1117. For the next decade Aleppo was the plaything of transitory rulers, often petty warlords invited in from the Turkish principalities of southern Anatolia by the Aleppan notables, who were desperate to find a competent military leader. Among these the most effective was undoubtedly Il-Ghazi of Mardin (regn. 1119–22), who led his forces, made up largely of Turcoman tribesmen hired for the occasion, to a crushing victory at Sarmada (Latin, Ager Sanguinis) over Roger of Antioch in 1119, a victory which undermined Antioch's military power for many years and undoubtedly saved Aleppo from imminent conquest by the Latin settlers. Il-Ghazi's death from a sudden illness in 1122 again threw Aleppo's fate into question. Only in January 1128, when Aleppo was occupied without resistance by the newly installed *atabeg* of Mosul, Zengi b. Aqsunqur, was order restored. Indeed, Zengi's standing as a senior officer and governor in the Seljuqid empire, together with his ability to combine the resources of Mosul and Aleppo, gave him a power-base such as no Syrian ruler had enjoyed since the death of Tutush three decades earlier.

The dynastic history of Damascus was simpler. Ridwan's half-brother Duqaq was too young to rule by himself, but he had the support of an able and loyal *atabeg*, Tughtigin, a former *mamluk* of Tutush's. When Duqaq died in 1104

⁸ Seljuqid Damascus: Mouton (1994); Yared-Riachi (1997). Seljuqid Aleppo: Eddé (1986). Broader studies by Cahen (1940), pp. 177–307; Elisséeff (1967), II, pp. 277–332.

at roughly the age of twenty, the throne passed to his infant son Tutush II, but Tughtigin continued to be the *de facto* ruler. Tutush II died very soon, and his successor, Duqaq's younger brother Irtash, fled to Mesopotamia within the year. After 1104 Tughtigin ruled alone, as an *atabeg* without a prince.⁹ In 1116, Sultan Muhammad in Baghdad finally recognized the reality that there was no longer a prince of the Seljuqid line in Damascus and formally invested Tughtigin as hereditary prince of the city. He reigned there until his death in 1128, having passed a total of thirty-three years at the head of affairs.

The other major cities of Seljuqid Syria – Homs, Hama and Antioch – continued to be governed by amirs who had been appointed (or at least recognized) by Tutush. In principle these men were subordinate to Ridwan or Duqaq, but in fact they acted quite independently and sometimes in open opposition to their overlords. Jerusalem (a city of symbolic rather than strategic or economic importance) was occupied in 1098 by the Fatimid wazir al-Afdal, who thus took advantage of the chaos among the Seljuqids to restore central Palestine to the Egyptian sphere of influence. The question of Antioch was quickly though unhappily resolved by the crusader conquest of the city in the summer of 1098, and Jerusalem suffered a similar fate a year later. Homs and Hama remained in Muslim hands; sometimes autonomous and sometimes controlled from Damascus or Aleppo, they at least continued to be part of the now much-reduced Seljuqid political enterprise in Syria. The progressive fall of the port cities to the crusaders did not affect the structure of Seljuqid rule, of course, since these had been Fatimid possessions.

Whatever the personal qualities of Duqaq and Ridwan, they could not have faced a more difficult situation. Each possessed only a tiny standing army: almost certainly no more than 1,000 men each. These regular forces were made up of the prince's personal *mamluks* together with whatever number of free mercenaries (usually Turkish, but sometimes Kurdish as well) he could afford to pay and equip on a permanent basis. In the present state of research, it is simply not clear whether or not the amirs who commanded these forces maintained additional troops of their own, paid from the *iqta's* from which they drew their own salaries and allowances. If there were separate amirs' contingents, we do not know their numbers or what percentage of a whole they represented.

⁹ Duqaq's mother Safwat al-Mulk was suspected by some of having poisoned him. (She was also the wife of Tughtigin; it was very common for Seljuqid rulers to cement an *atabeg's* loyalty by having him marry the mother of the prince whom he was to guard.) The evidence for her guilt is vague, however; possibly certain chroniclers confused this Safwat al-Mulk with her namesake Safwat al-Mulk Zumurud Khatun, the wife of Tughtigin's son Taj al-Muluk Bori, who certainly did arrange the murder of her son Shams al-Muluk Isma'il in 1135. Tutush II's sudden death also raised suspicions, but infant mortality was rampant in premodern times, and the Seljuqids tended to be short-lived in any case.

Ridwan and Duqaq were thus forced to recruit Turcoman or Arab bedouin auxiliaries on an *ad hoc* basis; these could be effective warriors, but neither prince could pay them well enough to keep their services for more than a single battle and they often evaporated into the steppes at the most awkward possible moment. Aleppo and Damascus both had substantial urban militias, made up of young men (*ahdath*) recruited from the poorer social groups in the cities. These militias were of real value in defending a city against sieges, but they were quite useless in the open field. In peacetime, moreover, they often disrupted public order, and within the confines of a walled town they were well able to threaten a prince's ability to police and administer his own capital.

Control over the militias, and indeed any sort of effective governance, required close cooperation with the urban notables, and in particular with a figure called the *ra'is al-balad* (roughly, 'town headman').¹⁰ This latter was sometimes invested with his office by princely decree, and he often had certain administrative and fiscal functions. In the final analysis, however, he normally belonged to an influential and well-established local family. As such, he was the spokesman at court for the interests of all the city's leading families. He was also the man through whom the urban militias were recruited and kept in order. In a very real sense, then, he was not appointed by the prince but recognized by him. Apart from the *ra'is al-balad*, the local notables normally supplied those religious and civil officials without whom a government could not function: judges, mosque functionaries, fiscal agents, sometimes even the prince's chief of administration (the *wazir*). So long as they had the support of the militias, the urban notables of early twelfth-century Syria were easily a match for the Seljuqid princes and their armies. This was the case until the mid-twelfth century; thereafter the increasingly powerful princes would come to rely more heavily (though never exclusively) on outsiders, on scholars and administrators who did not belong to established local families but were itinerant professionals who had made their careers as members of the ruler's personal entourage.

Finally, Ridwan, Duqaq and their immediate successors had to face the crusaders. With only their own resources, the Syrian princes were barely able to defend their territories. Certainly neither could hope to dislodge the crusaders without strong support from the Seljuqid sultan in Iraq. However, the Great Seljuqids had never abandoned their claim to Syria. In principle, the princes of Aleppo and Damascus were subordinate to the sultans in Iraq and Iran. Seeking their military aid thus entailed considerable political risk. Fortunately,

¹⁰ An early but useful study is that of H. A. R. Gibb, in his introduction to his translation of Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Dhayl ta'rikh Dimashq*. See also Ashtor-Strauss (1956), pp. 73–128; Cahen (1958–9); Havemann (1975); Mouton (1994), pp. 231–7.

Syria was only of marginal concern to the Great Seljuqids, with the result that their aid was occasional and often half-hearted. The sultans themselves never led an expedition to Syria. This is quite understandable in the case of the beleaguered Berk-Yaruk, but it was true also of Muhammad Tapar, whose throne was relatively secure. Mahmud and Mas'ud were even less concerned with Syrian affairs. When they did intervene, the Seljuqid sultans assigned full responsibility to their governors of Mosul.¹¹ Indeed, for the first fifty years of the crusading era – from the siege of Antioch in 1098 down to the death of Zengi in 1146 – Mosul would be the political and military keystone of Muslim resistance to the crusaders.

Ridwan was particularly skittish about military expeditions from the east, and between 1110 and 1113 he consistently sabotaged the far-sighted efforts of the *atabeg* Mawdud of Mosul. In Damascus, Duqaq and his successor Tughtigin were readier to cooperate, but that only made the enterprise even more dubious in Ridwan's eyes. Possessing few resources and a small territory entirely surrounded by his enemies, Ridwan was determined to retain his throne at any price. He thus pursued a constantly shifting series of alliances, each aimed at the opponent which seemed at the moment to be most dangerous. In this perspective, Latin Antioch was as likely to be a treaty partner as an opponent. Though a Sunni, Ridwan was also happy to ally himself with the Nizari Isma'ilis (the so-called Assassins) to ward off undue pressure, and we find them operating openly in Aleppo as early as 1100. It is likely that he used them to murder his former *atabeg* Janah al-Dawla in Aleppo (1103) and Mawdud of Mosul in Damascus (1113).¹²

In the beginning, the crusader occupation in Edessa, Antioch and especially Jerusalem was a touch-and-go operation. Neither Damascus nor Aleppo was in any immediate danger. But by 1105, with the crushing defeats of an allied Egyptian-Damascene army at Ramla and Ridwan's army at Artah, the Latin settlers had secured a solid foothold. They now embarked on a systematic policy of expansion, a policy which would secure for them every seaport north of Gaza, all Palestine west of the Jordan and parts of southern Transjordan. In the face of this expansion, both Damascus and Aleppo were extremely vulnerable and would remain so for decades to come. Damascus and Aleppo were often compelled to pay a heavy tribute to keep the Latin states of Jerusalem and

¹¹ The governors of Mosul, down to and including Zengi, were *atabegs* for young Seljuqid princes who were assigned that city as their personal appanage. Even when their wards disappeared from view, the governors retained this title. It thus became customary to refer to the governor as the *atabeg* of Mosul.

¹² The Seljuqid court in Baghdad accused Tughtigin of plotting this murder, but Elisséeff ((1967), II, 308–9) argues that Ridwan was the only one who stood to gain from it. On the Assassins in Syria, see Lewis (1967), pp. 97–124.

Antioch at bay. In addition, both were coerced into sharing the revenues from some of their richest agricultural lands with their Frankish 'neighbours', and this arrangement obviously undermined their fiscal resources. Aleppo suffered far more than Damascus, however; it was a much smaller state and faced a greater military threat on all sides. Indeed, Aleppo and its dependencies seem to have been progressively impoverished throughout Ridwan's reign and the fifteen chaotic years that followed his death in 1113. Ridwan's notorious avarice and tyranny certainly did not help matters, but it must be admitted that his back was to the wall.

Under Tughtigin's aegis (regn. 1104–28), in contrast, Damascus entered a period of modest but growing prosperity. He faced a somewhat more favourable situation than Ridwan, to be sure. He had only one serious enemy, albeit a formidable one – the kingdom of Jerusalem. His domains reached from Bosra and Salkhad in the south to Hama in the north; they included the rich grainfields of the Hawran and the Bīqā', and Damascus itself was one of the finest oases in the Middle East. Tribute payments and shared-revenue arrangements were a severe burden but did not destroy the fiscal integrity of his regime. It is also important that he had a long, uncontested reign; the three decades of internal stability which Damascus enjoyed under his aegis stand in sharp contrast to the turbulence of the eleventh century. Finally, he was by all reports a far more equitable ruler than Ridwan – his passing in 1128 was greeted with genuine grief and distress among his subjects – and this too must have helped to reinvigorate the economic life of his principality.

Tughtigin was a cautious man, far more concerned to defend his principality than to try to expand it. A firm advocate of Sunni Islam, he did what he could to protect Muslim Syria from crusader ambitions, and entered into a wide array of alliances with the Fatimids, the Seljuqid *atabegs* of Mosul, even Aleppo. However, he knew how limited his resources and opportunities were. Like Ridwan, albeit more reluctantly, he was willing to enter an alliance with the Latins against Muslim rivals when he felt seriously threatened. More often, he would seek a truce even on unfavourable terms, either to buy off Latin depredations or to give himself the leisure to deal with his Muslim rivals. For this reason, later chroniclers and modern scholarship have treated him rather dismissively, but in fact he laid the foundations for the cultural and political vitality of Damascus in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The year 1128 marks a watershed: the beginning of the end of Syria's political fragmentation and a rise in Muslim military power sufficient not only to meet the Latins on a more equal footing but even to win victories with permanent consequences. It also saw at least a temporary reversal of fortunes in Damascus and Aleppo. With the death of Tughtigin, the principality of Damascus gradually slid into diplomatic isolation and political marginality for

the next quarter century. In contrast, Zengi's seizure of power not only made Aleppo the political centre of Syria for several decades, but opened a century which would witness the restoration of the city's economic fortunes and the rebirth of its cultural and religious life.¹³

To be sure, Damascus did not always lack for effective rulers in these years. Tughtigin's son Taj al-Muluk Böri (regn. 1128–32) was a worthy but tragically short-lived successor to his father. His own sons (three of whom succeeded him as *atabeg* of Damascus) were not of the same metal, but his widow Safwat al-Mulk and then the amir Mu'īn al-Din Unur, an old *mamluk* of Tughtigin's, successfully defended the independence of Damascus against both the crusaders and Zengi throughout the late 1130s and 1140s. Upon the death of Unur in 1149, the government reverted to Böri's grandson Mujir al-Din Uvaq (regn. 1140–54), but he was quickly forced to give way before the rising power of Zengi's son and successor in Aleppo, Nur al-Din Mahmud, who occupied Damascus peaceably in April 1154.

Zengi's control of Mosul and Aleppo made him the paramount ruler in Mesopotamia and north Syria.¹⁴ However, he was able to exploit this opportunity in large part because of his uncommon longevity; he reigned for nineteen years, until he was assassinated by a disgruntled page in 1146. Zengi was lauded by Ibn al-Athir (d. 1233), the court historian of the dynasty he founded, as the first real champion of the *jihad* against the crusaders, and this judgement was accepted by western scholars until the 1950s. Since that time, Zengi has usually been dismissed as just another power-seeking warlord, abler and more cunning than his contemporaries, perhaps, but most of all luckier, because in 1144 he seized the great prize of Edessa while its ruler Joscelin II was absent on campaign with most of his army. This judgement understates Zengi's achievement. During his two decades of rule, he built a durable and effective political system which provided at least the basic framework for the more brilliant reigns of his son Nur al-Din Mahmud and the latter's general Saladin.

In spite of the obvious military and strategic benefits that he derived from his control of both Mosul and Aleppo, Zengi faced a difficult challenge in trying to rule two major cities. First, Mosul and Aleppo were separated from each other by twenty days' march. Secondly, each belonged to a distinct if overlapping geopolitical system. Mosul always had to deal with the Great Seljuqids in

¹³ On Zengi and his era: Cahen (1940), pp. 347–73; Gibb (1969a); Elisséeff (1967), II, pp. 332–87; Mouton (1994), pp. 38–43; Yared-Riachi (1997), pp. 159–207.

¹⁴ Zengi was not *atabeg* in name only: Mosul was the appanage of Sultan Mahmud's infant son Alp Arslan, and Zengi held office as his guardian and tutor. Alp Arslan tried to take advantage of the confusion following Zengi's sudden demise in 1146 to reclaim his principality for himself. He failed, however, and was quickly heard of no more. Alp Arslan was the last Seljuqid prince of Mosul; henceforth, Zengi's heirs would hold it in their own name. Elisséeff (1967), II, pp. 391–4.

Baghdad and north-west Iran, and later on with the reviving 'Abbasid caliphate. Aleppo was lodged between central Syria, the Frankish-dominated coast, and the Turcoman amirates in upper Mesopotamia. Finally, each had its own political traditions and a jealous local elite. In short, when Zengi took power the two cities were hardly part of a common political system. Indeed, Aleppo (not only its princes but key notables as well) had demonstrated its fear of domination by Mosul many times over the preceding three decades.

Zengi overcame these difficulties by several means. First of all, in the manner of the Seljuqid sultans, he was constantly on the move between his two capitals, something which hindered the emergence of over-mighty viceroys. Equally important, his senior administrative cadre, whose key members usually travelled with him, was recruited from Mosul and the western Seljuqid lands; in this way his chancery and fiscal bureaux were run by men whose talents he knew and whose careers were directly dependent on him. On the other hand, religious officials in the major towns, such as judges, intendants and preachers in the great mosques, were typically recruited among established local families known for their piety and learning. Zengi's army has yet to be studied, but clearly he tried to build a substantial standing army, and relied much less on the Turcoman tribes of Mesopotamia than had his predecessors. Zengi was himself a Turk, the son of a *mamluk*, and for both officers and common soldiers he naturally favoured men like himself: Turkish *mamluks* and their descendants. However, such *mamluks* were scarce and expensive in the region he ruled. To compensate for this lack, he recruited widely among the Kurds who dominated the mountains north of Mosul, a policy continued by his Zengid successors and of course by the Ayyubids, who began as Kurdish officers in the Zengid armies. (The Kurds had long since become Muslims, so they were recruited as free mercenaries rather than *mamluks*, but in terms of their military prowess and the expense of maintaining them, that was a distinction without a difference.) In the time of Nur al-Din and Saladin, the Kurds would be placed in separate regiments organized according to the tribal origin of their members, but it is not clear that this practice was already established under Zengi.

The geographical character of his principality compelled Zengi to be engaged on two widely separated fronts. Both his own origins as a Seljuqid amir and his determination to expand his territories in northern Iraq drew him into an active involvement in Great Seljuqid politics. Indeed, Iraq was the major focus of his concern in the first half of his reign. By 1136, however, it was clear that he had little to gain by continued immersion in Iraqi affairs; likewise, neither Sultan Mas'ud nor any other Seljuqid prince had the power or will to threaten Zengi's own territories. He could thus devote much of his later career to Syria. Here he had two goals – to contain or drive back the Latins

in north Syria, thereby securing his position in Aleppo, and to seize control of Damascus. In his time few saw these goals as intimately linked. Fighting the Latins was of course meritorious in itself, but the struggle for Damascus was simple empire-building.

However sporadic and self-interested Zengi's campaigns against the Latins may have been, they were undoubtedly effective. His reconquest of Ma'arrat al-Nu'man (1135) not only restored an important town to Muslim rule, but did much to secure the western frontiers of Homs and Hama. He nearly captured King Fulk of Jerusalem at Barin in 1137, and after a stiff siege obtained the surrender of the place on terms. Though he did not directly confront the expedition led by the Byzantine emperor John II Komnenos in 1138, he did shadow it until external pressures compelled John to withdraw. That expedition marked the last serious Christian threat to Aleppo. Zengi's conquest of Edessa in 1144 was no doubt a stroke of luck, not the result of planning and long purpose, but in striking contrast to many of his predecessors he seized the opportunity when he saw it. Edessa was not the first major Muslim victory over the Franks, but it was the first to have irreversible consequences. The route between Mosul and Aleppo was now untrammelled, the Franks' position east of the Euphrates fatally compromised. We should not exaggerate, for the other crusader states were intact and would remain a formidable presence for decades to come. Still, Zengi's victories marked a real shift in the regional balance of power.

Zengi's designs on Damascus had more ambiguous results. In the end, they won him control of Hama, Homs and Baalbak, but also aroused a determined and successful resistance by the people of Damascus. His Syrian conquests reversed the relative political and military weight of Aleppo and Damascus. On the other hand, his repeated treachery toward the Bōrids of Damascus surely deferred the unification of Muslim Syria for many years. Zengi quickly seized Hama in 1130 by arresting its governor (a brother of Taj al-Muluk Bōri of Damascus) after Bōri had ordered him to join forces with Zengi in Aleppo. Briefly recaptured by Damascene forces in 1133, Hama was occupied again (this time permanently) in 1135. In the same year Zengi came within an ace of taking Damascus without a struggle. Its prince Shams al-Muluk Isma'il b. Bōri (regn. 1132–5), after some striking initial victories against Zengi and the Franks, had become increasingly erratic and tyrannical. Facing open revolt by the Damascenes, he secretly agreed to surrender Damascus to Zengi. Isma'il's mother, the redoubtable Safwat al-Mulk, learned about this in the nick of time and coldly had her son executed, turning the throne over to his younger brother Shihab al-Din Mahmud (regn. 1135–9). Zengi laid siege to Damascus but was not prepared to pursue the matter very long on this occasion, though he kept up unrelenting pressure against Damascus for the rest of his reign. He likewise

attacked Homs several times, but the city was always stoutly defended by its Bōrid governors. He finally obtained it in 1138 through a marriage alliance with the Bōrids: Shihab al-Din Mahmud of Damascus married Zengi's daughter, while Zengi himself married the prince's mother Safwat al-Mulk, who brought Homs as her dowry. The Damascenes no doubt hoped that this alliance would buy them a respite from Zengi's ambitions, but that was not the case. He took advantage of the murder of his son-in-law Shihab al-Din Mahmud in 1139 to seize Baalbak and besiege Damascus a second time. The garrison of Baalbak was massacred after having surrendered on terms. Zengi's motive for this act is unclear, since he was harsh but not mindlessly brutal, but it made the Damascenes all the more determined to hold out. The amir Mu'īn al-Din Unur, then administering the city on behalf of Shihab al-Din's heirs, took the grave but unavoidable step of allying himself with King Fulk of Jerusalem in order to force Zengi to retreat. The strategy was successful, and relations between Damascus and Jerusalem remained uncommonly cordial for nearly a decade, not surprisingly, since both states had every interest in checking the expansion of Zengi's power.

Zengi's skill as an empire-builder, along with the limitations imposed on him by the political world in which he lived, are revealed by the fate of his dominions upon his sudden death at the height of his power in 1146. Assassinated by one of his pages while encamped near Edessa, he had made no plans for the disposal of his lands, and so this task fell to his heirs and high officials. His oldest son Sayf al-Din Ghazi at once took control of Mosul, Zengi's original power-base and still the administrative and military core of his empire. His second son Nur al-Din Mahmud was escorted to Aleppo and quickly enthroned as the autonomous prince of that city and its dependencies. In an instant, the unitary state carved out by Zengi and sustained by his energy and iron will was transformed into a family confederation of the usual Seljuqid type. The new confederation was surprisingly harmonious, partly because Sayf al-Din Ghazi did not try to impose his authority on his younger brother in Aleppo; perhaps he did not reign long enough to pursue such ambitions. He died in 1149 and a third (much younger) brother, Qutb al-Din Mawdud, took the throne of Mosul. Mawdud enjoyed a long reign (1149–70) but always deferred to Nur al-Din.

Under Qutb al-Din Mawdud Mosul receded to the second plane within the Zengid confederation. It maintained a fairly long-lived hereditary succession (until 1234) and of course continued to dominate affairs in northern Iraq.¹⁵ When Nur al-Din died in 1174, Mawdud's two sons (Sayf al-Din Ghazi II,

¹⁵ There is no detailed study of the Zengids of Mosul after Zengi's death. See Elisséeff (1967), 11, on the period 1146–74. For the Ayyubid period (1174–1260), one must rely on biographies of Saladin (see below); Humphreys (1977b); and Patton (1991).

regn. 1170–80, and ‘Izz al-Din Mas‘ud, regn. 1180–93) struggled mightily to re-establish Mosul’s former paramountcy in north Syria and Mesopotamia. But faced with the ambition, tenacity and astuteness of the usurper Saladin (for so they regarded him), they had all they could do to preserve the independence of their city and its immediate hinterland. A key source of Mosul’s weakness, no doubt, is that after Mawdud’s death in 1170 the principality was divided into two and sometimes three appanages. As a result, the Zengid prince of Mosul no longer commanded the same resource base as his predecessors. The fate of Zengid Mosul holds few surprises; it was altogether typical of the Seljuqid and post-Seljuqid world of Iraq and western Iran.

Aleppo, however, followed a different path. With the enthronement of Nur al-Din Mahmud (regn. 1146–74), it became the centre of an expanding and relatively centralized state. Even when Nur al-Din’s state shrivelled and disappeared in the decade after his death, Aleppo remained both a focal point of Syrian politics and a thriving commercial and cultural centre for another eighty years. Had it not been for the Mongol catastrophe in 1260, Aleppo would no doubt have flourished far longer than that. No doubt Zengi’s long reign and his success in containing the Christian threat had done much to restore Aleppo’s social equilibrium and frayed economy. Still, it was very much the second city in his empire, being a base for his operations in Syria more than a permanent residence. Under Nur al-Din, however, Aleppo was (with Damascus after 1154) a real capital. It benefited enormously from his benefactions: revamped defences, a plethora of new mosques and colleges, a marked growth in population. Nor was Nur al-Din the city’s only patron, for he pressed his amirs and officials to follow his example. After the Ayyubids occupied the city in 1183, they energetically pursued his rebuilding of the city’s physical and institutional fabric. As an urban setting, Aleppo became the crown jewel of the Zengid and Ayyubid realms.¹⁶

Aleppo’s renaissance was not the product of some inexorable process; on the contrary, it was grounded in the fortunate accident of its new prince. Nur al-Din was twenty-nine when he mounted the throne, old enough to take personal charge of affairs, and he enjoyed an uncontested reign of almost three decades. More important, he had a rare combination of personal qualities. He combined high ambition with moderation, far-sighted vision with a sense of limits, austere personal piety with moderation and a commitment to justice. He was a competent though not brilliant battlefield commander, but he was an astute negotiator and won some of his most important successes through diplomacy. He quickly mastered the delicate art of obtaining and keeping the

¹⁶ Sauvaget (1941), I, ch. 8, pp. 109–54; Elisséeff (1967), III, pp. 750–80, 838–53, 915–18; Al-Tabba (1982), I, pp. 38–65; H. Gaube and E. Wirth, *Aleppo* (Wiesbaden, 1984), *passim*; Tabbaa (1997).

services of able soldiers and officials. These talents allowed him to build on the achievements of his father while rinsing away the bitter aftertaste that Zengi had left with so many. Most importantly, they gave him unparalleled credibility as an advocate of *jihad* against the Franks and hence of the Syrian unity necessary to pursue that goal effectively.¹⁷

Obviously the struggle against the Franks had been understood as *jihad* from the time of their first appearance. As we have seen, however, the struggle in God's path had been pursued only fitfully by the Muslim rulers of Syria and Egypt, both because it was a chancy and often discouraging business and because the westerners could be very useful allies (on a short-term basis, admittedly) against Muslim rivals. In any event, even the most dedicated men, like Tughtigin of Damascus or Mawdud of Mosul, seemed to visualize only a defensive policy, one of preventing crusader expansion and recovering key frontier zones rather than driving them out altogether. Even the sacred city of Jerusalem did not inspire loftier goals; its loss had been lamented but no one seriously thought of restoring it to Islam.

Nur al-Din quickly moved the meaning and purpose of the *jihad* against the Franks to a higher plane. His propaganda – far more systematic and pervasive than anything which had preceded it – argued four key points: (1) *jihad* was the primary duty of every Muslim ruler; (2) effective *jihad* required unity among the Muslims, under the leadership of that ruler who was best able to vindicate the cause of Islam; (3) *jihad* was a matter of moral rearmament, a struggle not only against foreign invaders but against heresy and corruption within Islam; (4) finally, the goal of *jihad* should be the complete recovery of all Muslim lands seized by the crusaders, the purification of those lands from their pollution, and the highest symbol of this campaign should be the recovery of Jerusalem. It was a programme of genius. It was made up of elements long familiar to Muslims, including key themes articulated by the early Seljuqids, but it combined these into a compelling whole whose innate rightness was irrefutable. Almost from the outset of his reign, therefore, Nur al-Din monopolized the symbols and values of Islam and thereby controlled the ideological discourse of Syria and Mesopotamia.¹⁸

Nur al-Din opened his career with several spectacular victories against the crusaders. At Inab (1149) he shattered the army of Antioch; among the slain was its prince, Raymond of Poitiers. Nur al-Din's victory left Antioch mired in political crisis for years, but he gained only limited advantages from the situation. In 1164, he won a second crushing victory against a combined Antiochene and

¹⁷ A meticulous survey of events in Elisséeff (1967), II, pp. 389–699; see also Cahen (1940), pp. 374–415; Gibb (1969b). Elisséeff (1967), III, contains a wealth of data on fiscal and military administration, economy and society, but these topics merit further analysis.

¹⁸ Sivan (1968), pp. 59–92.

Armenian force at Artah. That battle not only ended any possible military threat from Antioch but also led to the definitive loss of almost all Latin possessions east of the city. Even now, however, Nur al-Din felt unable to mount a siege against Antioch itself, and it remained in Christian hands for another century. Perhaps more important in the long run was his eradication of the county of Edessa, beginning with the bloody suppression of a revolt in the city of Edessa itself in 1146, and ending in 1151 with the occupation (carried out jointly with the Rum Seljuqids of Konya) of every town and fortress still controlled by the city's former ruler. In short, if Nur al-Din's success in restoring north Syria to Muslim rule was not total, it was very impressive; by the end of his reign the kingdom of Jerusalem carried the burden of the crusader enterprise almost alone.

Isolated as Jerusalem may have been, however, he made little direct progress against it. In 1157 he overwhelmed an army led by Baldwin III near Banyas and came within an ace of capturing the king himself. Striking as it was, however, this victory did not seriously threaten the integrity of the kingdom. Thereafter, Nur al-Din fell into a long period of political and military frustration, marked by an extremely destructive series of earthquakes throughout Syria (1157), two grave illnesses (1157, 1158) and a humiliating defeat at the Crac des Chevaliers (1162). He was also mired in a long but rather petty struggle with the Byzantines and the Rum Seljuqids over the northern frontiers of his kingdom. As the 1160s opened, the Christians had good reason to feel that they had won at least a stalemate with their formidable opponent.

It is ironic that after the first five years of his reign, Nur al-Din's truly decisive victories were won against Muslim opponents, and were as much political as military. However, it was these victories over Muslims that fatally undermined the foundations of Frankish rule in Palestine and exposed their lands to Saladin's assaults in the late 1180s. The first of these was his annexation of Damascus in 1154, a victory won by negotiation, though the powerful army encamped outside the walls no doubt made his proposals especially persuasive. This had been his father Zengi's lifelong ambition, but Nur al-Din laid the groundwork with far more care. He saw at the beginning of his reign that the Börid line (now represented by the youthful Mujir al-Din Uvaq) still commanded substantial loyalty among the notables and populace. Thus he bided his time, honeycombing the city with agents and sending substantial subsidies to influential people whom he hoped to win over to his cause. Only when Uvaq had conclusively demonstrated his weakness and ineptitude did Nur al-Din move against the city in a decisive way. By this point most Damascenes were convinced that he alone could save them from imminent conquest by the crusaders, and the city opened its gates to him in May 1154.

The occupation of Damascus reunified Syria for the first time since the death of Tutush sixty years earlier, and the way in which unity was achieved ensured

that Nur al-Din could exploit the city's military and fiscal resources with no fear of rebellion or subversion. Indeed, Nur al-Din saw to it that Damascus benefited from the new order of things; it became his second capital, and as with Aleppo he showered benefactions on it, including some of its most characteristic religious monuments.¹⁹ Under his regime, the local notables and the militias lost most of the political power that they had enjoyed under the Seljuqid and Bōrid princes; Nur al-Din's garrisons were quite able to defend the city and maintain law and order without them. On the other hand, men of religion (some of whom were newcomers, but many of whom belonged to long-established notable families) had ready access to this pious ruler, and their influence extended into many areas of public policy – taxes, relations with the Franks, justice – outside matters of religion narrowly defined. As with Aleppo, the reign of Nur al-Din marked a clear and long-term rise in the political, intellectual and economic importance of the city.

Nur al-Din's second victory was in many ways an accident, created not by any long-term strategic plan but by sheer force of circumstances. Even so, the occupation of Egypt in 1168 and the ending of the 'heretical' Fatimid caliphate of Cairo in 1171 was surely his greatest military achievement.²⁰ It was a profoundly ironic achievement, to be sure: Nur al-Din never set foot in Egypt, he derived very little military or financial benefit from it during his lifetime, and the victory of his armies there led directly to the ruin of his own dynasty. However, Nur al-Din's conquest of Egypt not only placed the kingdom of Jerusalem in an untenable geopolitical position, it *potentially* more than doubled the financial and military resources at his disposal. He now ruled, or at least exercised unrivalled paramountcy within, a massive realm stretching from Mosul to Cairo. In principle, a grand strategy aimed at the recovery of Jerusalem and the expulsion of the Franks was now possible. On the other hand, developing and executing such a strategy was a very difficult problem, and in the few years remaining to him Nur al-Din made little progress on it.

The fundamental problem which Egypt posed for Nur al-Din was that he did not control the country directly, and he had no effective means of imposing his will on those who did, even though they were his own men. Egypt had fallen into his hands because of the progressive disintegration of the Fatimid regime in mid-century, a process which accelerated after the assassination of the vizier al-Salih Tala' b. Ruzzik in 1161. In the mad scramble for power after al-Salih's death, the various contenders sought allies anywhere they could find

¹⁹ Elisséeff (1967), III, pp. 919–30; Al-Tabba (1982), I, pp. 86–138; Ibn 'Asakir, *Tārikh madinat Dimashq*, trans. Elisséeff.

²⁰ Elisséeff (1967), II, pp. 593–690; Ehrenkreutz (1972), chs. 3–6; Lyons and Jackson (1982), pp. 6–69.

them. Inevitably one of them turned to Amalric, the energetic new king of Jerusalem (regn. 1163–74), who saw in this turmoil a chance to add the land of Egypt to his beleaguered realm. Just as inevitably, another rival (the ill-fated Shawar) sought Nur al-Din's support for his ambitions. This three-way struggle between Egypt's rival politicians, Amalric and Nur al-Din wore on inconclusively for five years.

By autumn 1168, however, matters came to a crisis. The Fatimid state had no capacity whatever to defend itself, and Amalric's army was now encamped outside the walls of Cairo and seemed on the verge of taking the city. For the third time, Nur al-Din dispatched a major expeditionary force to Egypt. As in his two previous interventions (1164, 1167), he placed this force under the command of one of his oldest and most trusted amirs, the Kurd Shirkuh, who had helped him gain control of Aleppo at the outset of his reign. As in the two previous campaigns, Shirkuh was accompanied by a favorite nephew who had been part of his military entourage for many years, Salah al-Din Yusuf b. Ayyub (Saladin). This time the outcome was decisive: the Latins were forced to withdraw, and the Fatimid vizier Shawar, whose ceaseless machinations had fuelled the confusion of these years, was seized and executed. The hapless Fatimid caliph al-'Adid was compelled to name Shirkuh as his new vizier (January 1169). With that act Egypt became part of Nur al-Din's empire, as a kind of protectorate in which legal sovereignty remained with the Fatimid caliph but all effective political and military power was exercised by Nur al-Din's amirs. Shirkuh died quite suddenly after only two months, however. To the consternation of many in the Syrian expeditionary force, Shirkuh's inner circle swiftly manoeuvred his nephew Saladin into his place. Saladin was at this point thirty-two years old and a veteran of many battles, but he had little senior command or administrative experience. Moreover, as a Kurd he was viewed by the powerful Turkish amirs with some suspicion and disdain. Finally, he had inherited a country in political and fiscal chaos, and the Christian threat to Egypt remained grave.

We cannot follow Saladin's career in detail, but a brief sketch will bring out the key points. His first five years (1169–74) were spent as Nur al-Din's nominal viceroy in Egypt. Among some medieval and modern historians his conduct in this period has earned him a reputation for unbridled opportunism. Nur al-Din certainly found his new viceroy (whom he had had no part in choosing) uncooperative at best. Nur al-Din was eager to use Egypt as a base for large-scale coordinated campaigns against the kingdom of Jerusalem, but Saladin was dilatory about sending money or troops and almost openly sabotaged at least one campaign.

However, Saladin did face very real threats in Egypt, and until those were mastered he had good reason to focus on securing his position there. He took advantage of the death of the Fatimid caliph al-'Adid in 1171 (at the age

of twenty-three) to terminate that dynasty. In the eyes of Nur al-Din and Saladin, both staunch Sunnis, the Isma'ili interpretation of Islam espoused by the Fatimids was flagrantly heretical. This action therefore fulfilled a crucial demand of Nur al-Din's platform, that the *jihad* against heresy must be pursued as vigorously as the *jihad* against the crusaders. Although the suppression of the Fatimids had gone smoothly, however, pro-Fatimid conspiracies and rumours of conspiracy continued for years. Moreover, Saladin needed to reconstruct the Egyptian fiscal system so that he could replace the large but ineffective Fatimid army with a smaller but more costly cavalry force on the Zengid model. The long-term economic impact of Saladin's reforms in Egypt has been extensively debated, but it is undeniable that he devoted much attention to this problem, and that under his aegis were laid the foundations of an Egyptian military administration which would endure until the end of the Mamluk sultanate in 1517.²¹

Whatever Saladin's excuses, an open rupture with Nur al-Din was almost a certainty; it was avoided only by the latter's death in Damascus in May 1174. Nur al-Din had left but a single heir, al-Salih Isma'il, and for once there should have been no succession crisis. But of course there was: al-Salih was only eleven years old, and the struggle to assert guardianship over him quickly broke up Nur al-Din's inner circle. Al-Salih was spirited off to Aleppo by one faction, while another in Damascus invited Saladin to occupy the city. He did not let the opportunity slip, and by the spring of 1175 he was master of all Muslim Syria except Aleppo itself. Saladin appropriated Nur al-Din's programme of *jihad*, Muslim unity and the expulsion of the Latins, and soon created a propaganda apparatus even more formidable than his mentor's. In so acting he portrayed himself as the sole true heir of Nur al-Din's political legacy. In asserting this role he faced the counter-claims of the Zengid ruler of Mosul, Sayf al-Din Ghazi II b. Mawdud, who was the obvious guardian of the Zengid patrimony. But Nur al-Din's old amirs were jealous of their prerogatives and regarded Sayf al-Din's attempts to intervene in Syria with suspicion. Moreover, Sayf al-Din's army had been shattered at the Horns of Hama in April 1175, and for the rest of his reign he could do nothing to loosen Saladin's grip on Syria. The inability of the Zengid princes to coordinate an effective resistance to Saladin and his successors would in fact be a crucial factor in north Syrian and Mesopotamian history for the next fifty years.²²

²¹ Ehrenkreutz ((1972), pp. 172, 187–8, 234–5) is very critical, Lyons and Jackson ((1982), pp. 49–66 and *passim*) are dismissive. The relevant data are presented in Gibb (1962), pp. 74–88; Cahen, (1977); Rabie (1972); Sato (1997), ch. 3.

²² Saladin's career after Nur al-Din is adequately covered by Gibb (1973), Ehrenkreutz (1972) and Lyons and Jackson (1982). Their interpretations of his goals and achievements differ sharply. For Saladin's ideological programme, Sivan (1968), ch. 4.

For several years after 1175, however, Saladin's advance seemed to stall. In spite of constant pressure against Aleppo, al-Salih Isma'il enjoyed strong support there, and Saladin could not repeat Nur al-Din's peaceful occupation of Damascus in 1154. Likewise, his struggle against the Franks – the supposed *raison d'être* of his empire-building – saw only tactical successes. He did consolidate his early gains on several levels, to be sure. He completed his reform of the Egyptian army and also built a formidable navy, which for more than a decade was able to vie with Italian fleets for control of the south-eastern Mediterranean.²³ No less important, he was able to win over most of Nur al-Din's amirs and high officials in Syria, and he showed himself no less skilful than his mentor in retaining their loyalty throughout his reign.

Between 1181 and 1186, Saladin was finally able to make himself the paramount ruler in north Syria and Mesopotamia. The death of al-Salih Isma'il in 1181 deprived Zengid loyalists in Aleppo of a crucial symbol, and Saladin occupied the city in 1183. Aleppo was not the end of the game, however, for to Saladin Mosul was hardly less vital. As the traditional anchor of Zengid power, Mosul posed a latent threat to Saladin's position in Syria; in addition, its troops would be a valuable addition to his armies. He faced a tenacious opponent in 'Izz al-Din Mas'ud, who (like al-Salih Isma'il in Aleppo) had the firm support of his soldiers and subjects. Two sieges of Mosul (1182, 1185) failed, and Saladin had to be content with 'Izz al-Din's promise to send troops for the war against the infidels upon demand. Though reduced almost to a client-state, Mosul remained a Zengid city, due both to 'Izz al-Din Mas'ud's stubborn resistance and to a near fatal illness in autumn 1185 which forced Saladin to break off his campaign. However, after twelve years of unrelenting struggle, Saladin had fulfilled his ambition to reconstitute Nur al-Din's empire. The issue now confronting him was how to use the resources that he had so painstakingly assembled.

Similar to Nur al-Din in his goals and political talents, Saladin nevertheless constructed his new empire along quite new lines. Both Zengi and Nur al-Din had maintained a unitary state during their lifetimes, and the division of Zengi's empire into two autonomous principalities upon his death conformed to Seljuqid political values but was never planned by him. Saladin, in contrast, deliberately set out to distribute his territories to his kinsmen during his lifetime, indeed at the very height of his power.²⁴ The Ayyubid confederation did not just happen; it was a carefully designed enterprise. No doubt Saladin had observed the agonizing disintegration of the Seljuqid and Zengid empires and hoped to avoid a similar fate for his domains. The complexity of his arrangements reflected his desire to meet the 'legitimate' expectations of his

²³ Ehrenkreutz (1955); Pryor (1988), pp. 112–34.

²⁴ Humphreys (1977b), pp. 52–66.

very large family, as well as his hope of devising a balanced political structure in which the confederation's paramount prince could lead but not not dominate his colleagues.

Saladin had achieved supremacy in Egypt and then Syria in part by using his numerous kinsmen as his chief commanders and governors. These men were exceedingly ambitious, but Saladin was able to control them through generous rewards and by persuading them that they were part of a winning enterprise. Two older brothers, Turanshah and Tughtigin, found it hard to defer to his authority; he soon sent them off to carve out an effectively independent domain in the Yemen. Ayyubid rule there would last until 1229, and it ensured friendly control of the economically vital Red Sea route to India and east Africa. In the late 1170s, he assigned the central Syrian towns of Homs, Baalbak and Hama as *iqta's* to a cousin and two nephews. When the original assignees died he transferred their *iqta's* to their sons, thereby confirming that these were hereditary appanages. However, only after the occupation of Aleppo in 1183 did Saladin begin to carve out the major princely appanages within his empire. These were given their definitive form in 1186, after the end of his last campaign against Mosul. Not surprisingly, the settlement of 1186 favoured Saladin's own sons, now approaching adulthood: Damascus went to his eldest, al-Afdal 'Ali; Egypt to al-'Aziz 'Uthman; and Aleppo to al-Zahir Ghazi.²⁵ He kept no appanage for himself – a clear sign of his confidence in the loyalty of his sons. A few years later, he placed the crucial frontier zones of Transjordan and the East²⁶ in the more experienced hands of his younger brother al-'Adil Sayf al-Din, for many years an indispensable counsellor and administrator. In spite of the turbulence of Ayyubid dynastic history after Saladin's death, the quasi-hereditary appanages into which he had divided his empire proved highly stable and indeed would constitute the framework of Syrian provincial administration down to the Ottoman conquest.

Up to the end of 1186, Saladin had conducted only occasional campaigns against the kingdom of Jerusalem; the kingdom's frontiers were still stable, its

²⁵ The Ayyubid naming system requires a brief explanation. An Ayyubid princely name consisted of three parts. The first element is a throne name combining *al-malik* (king) with an attribute; thus Saladin's throne name was al-Malik al-Nasir, the Victorious King. In modern scholarship it is normal to omit 'al-Malik' and to cite only the attribute: hence al-'Adil, al-Zahir, etc. The second element – often omitted in modern usage – is an honorific identifying one's service to or standing in the faith: al-'Adil was Sayf al-Din, 'Sword of the True Faith', Saladin was Salah al-Din, 'Integrity of the True Faith'. Finally, there is a personal name, often a Qur'anic prophet: Yusuf (Joseph), Muhammad, 'Isa (Jesus), and so on.

²⁶ The Arabic sources call the Ayyubid domains east of the Euphrates 'al-Bilad al-Sharqiyya' – 'the Eastern Territories', or simply 'the East'. The portions ruled by the Ayyubids were constantly changing, but they variously included the regions of Diyar Mudar (with its chief cities of Harran and Edessa), Diyar Bakr and Diyar Rabi'a (whose capital is Mosul).

armies and major strongholds intact. Moreover, Saladin was restrained from any new initiatives by a truce which he had signed in 1185. Then, early in 1187, the truce was violated by the lord of Kerak, Reginald of Châtillon, who raided an Egyptian caravan passing near his fortress. Saladin now had a *casus belli* and no plausible excuse for refusing to act. In the spring of 1187, he mustered the largest field army he ever led, some 12,000 regular cavalry, plus an unknown number of auxiliaries and volunteers. (These 12,000 cavalry represented roughly half the regular forces available to him, including allied contingents supplied by Mosul and other Mesopotamian client-states.)²⁷ Until this point, he had suffered many criticisms of his commitment to the *jihad* against the Franks. But in the next two years he redeemed them all with a brilliantly conducted series of campaigns. The kingdom of Jerusalem's army was annihilated at the Horns of Hattin in July 1187 and Jerusalem itself fell in October. By the autumn of 1188, every Latin stronghold in the interior had been captured, and every major coastal city had fallen, with the exception of Tyre, Tripoli and Antioch. Another season's campaigning would surely finish the task. A more complete realization of Nur al-Din's old programme can hardly be imagined.

As is so often the case, victory ended in disappointment. Bitter resistance by the last Latin strongholds, combined with a powerful new crusade led by a soldier of genius, Richard I of England, wrested back the Palestinian coast between Ascalon and Tyre, and came close even to reclaiming Jerusalem. After Richard's arrival, Saladin never won another battle. However, he kept his exhausted and discouraged forces in the field for three years – no trivial accomplishment – and in the end he negotiated a truce (September 1192) which saved most of what he had won. Saladin was now old and tired, and when he fell ill six months later he no longer had the strength to recover. But as he lay on his deathbed in Damascus, he could look back on his career with a rare sense of satisfaction, for he was surely the only monarch in twelfth-century Egypt and Syria who had achieved almost everything he had set out to do.

On 4 March 1193, Saladin's vast empire passed to his heirs. The head of the confederation was the prince of Damascus and his eldest son, al-Afdal 'Ali, now aged twenty-four. In spite of Saladin's careful planning, al-Afdal's position was a weak one. First, his capacity to obtain deference within the Ayyubid family was tenuous, for he was only the brother of two major princes (al-'Aziz 'Uthman of Egypt and al-Zahir Ghazi of Aleppo) and the nephew of a third (al-'Adil Abu Bakr of Transjordan and the East). Moreover, he had had no part in creating his father's empire, so that the other princes owed nothing to him. Likewise, Saladin's amirs regarded him not as a master but as a tool for

²⁷ For the armies of Saladin and the later Ayyubids, see Gibb (1962); Elisséeff (1967), III, pp. 720–50; Humphreys (1977b), pp. 67–99; Ayalon (1977) and (1981).

their own ambitions. Thirdly, Damascus lay at the heart of the confederation, but it did not have the fiscal and military resources to dominate the other appanages. Egypt in particular was far richer and could support a standing army three or four times larger than that of Damascus.²⁸ In fact between 1198 and 1250 the ruler of Egypt would always be the head of the confederation for just this reason. Finally, Saladin's brother al-'Adil was far more experienced and prestigious than the other princes. He had played a crucial role in building the empire and in the wars against the Franks, and it was hard to imagine him deferring to his nephews.

Under these circumstances, it is no surprise that Saladin's political settlement quickly collapsed.²⁹ The Ayyubid confederation fell into eight years of political intrigue and civil war. When the dust finally settled in 1201, only al-Zahir Ghazi of Aleppo still retained his patrimony; the rest of the empire was in the hands of al-'Adil. He followed Saladin in assigning the major appanages to three of his own sons: Egypt to the eldest, al-Kamil Muhammad; Damascus to al-Mu'azzam 'Isa; and the East mainly to al-Ashraf Musa. Like his brother, he kept no appanage for himself, but his authority was uncontested. Hama and Homs represented no threat to the balance of power within the confederation and remained in the hands of the princes installed by Saladin.³⁰ The Ayyubid confederation thus retained the structure that Saladin had given it in 1186, though it was now dominated by a new lineage. This new dispensation would prove more durable than Saladin's, however, for al-'Adil's descendants would be the paramount actors within the confederation down to the death of al-Salih Ayyub (regn. 1240–9).

Al-'Adil recognized that Aleppo, as the last major appanage held by a son of Saladin, held a special place within the reconstituted Ayyubid order. He asserted his supremacy by having al-Zahir Ghazi (regn. 1186–1216) marry his daughter Dayfa Khatun, and it was the child of that marriage, al-'Aziz Muhammad, who succeeded al-Zahir in 1216. Otherwise, however, al-'Adil interfered little

²⁸ In the 1220s, the standing forces of Egypt under al-Kamil Muhammad are given by Ibn Wasil as 12,000, those of Damascus under al-Mu'azzam 'Isa as 3,000 (or 4,000 in another but less reliable manuscript). Each Ayyubid principality had its own army, separately recruited, trained and financed. In periods when there was an effective paramount ruler, as under Saladin and al-'Adil, these separate armies could readily be combined. Obviously that was not always the case. The total regular forces – almost entirely heavy cavalry – of the Ayyubid confederation numbered 22,000 to 24,000.

²⁹ The Ayyubids after Saladin: Gibb (1969d) Cahen (1960b). Rise and domination of al-'Adil: Humphreys (1977a), chs. 3–4.

³⁰ Hama was ruled by the descendants of Saladin's nephew Taqi al-Din 'Umar b. Shahanshah, who had been one of his ablest though most troublesome commanders; Homs by the descendants of his uncle Shirkuh, whose patronage had been crucial in his rise to power in Egypt. Both these appanages would enjoy an unbroken hereditary succession down to the end of Ayyubid rule in Syria: Homs until 1263, Hama until 1328.

in Aleppo's internal affairs. Al-Zahir was thus enabled to build a remarkably stable and centralized state, one able to endure two infant successions to the throne (in 1216 and 1236) without a major political crisis. After the death of al-ʿAdil in 1218, in fact, Aleppo tended to pursue an independent regional policy, focused chiefly on the Rum Seljuqids, now at the height of their power, and was usually able to keep clear of the rivalries that constantly pitted the other Ayyubid principalities against one another. Only with the grave succession crisis that broke out after the death of al-Kamil Muhammad (regn. 1218–38) was Aleppo dragged back into the thick of things. Though it would take us beyond the chronological limits of this chapter to explore Aleppo's role in these events, we should note the skilful diplomacy of the queen-mother Dayfa Khatun, who was the officially recognized and much-admired regent for her young grandson al-Nasir Yusuf until her death in 1242. Through her the hand of al-ʿAdil was still felt in the affairs of Aleppo.

The reign of al-ʿAdil was on the whole one of consolidation rather than dynamic expansion. This may be partly a matter of personality, since throughout his career al-ʿAdil had more often been an administrator and diplomat than a soldier. He was also in his late fifties by the time he consolidated his power in 1201, and he had been almost constantly at war for two decades. A degree of caution and fatigue seems altogether understandable. His first concern was to rebuild the treasury, left almost empty by his brother's empire-building, the constant full-scale warfare against the Franks between 1187 and 1192 and eight years of intra-dynastic strife after 1193. This policy required an aggressive quest for revenues, and al-ʿAdil was not beloved amongst his subjects. In the end he was successful, however, and his heirs, faced with the terrible crisis of the Fifth Crusade (1217–21), had good reason to be grateful to him. He also had to reshape the Ayyubid armies in Egypt and Damascus, riven and factionalized by the civil war. This he did with great discretion, often permitting the passage of time to solve the more delicate problems. His skill is shown by the fact that from 1201 to the end of his reign, he faced no significant military unrest. Finally, he undertook a major programme of refortification throughout his domains; among many impressive monuments, the massive citadel of Damascus embodies his goals and achievements with a special power.

Al-ʿAdil in fact did not lack imperial ambitions, but he focused them on Mesopotamia and south-eastern Anatolia; either directly or through the agency of his son al-Ashraf Musa, he was able to bring most of the old Zengid dominions, apart from Mosul and Sinjar, within his realm, in addition to the region around Lake Van. The goals of this expansion are only partly clear. The Ayyubids had had their eye on Mesopotamia and Mosul since Saladin's time, of course, and in any case it made sense to pre-empt any efforts at a Zengid revanche in Mesopotamia and north Syria. The Lake Van region was remote

and poor, however, and it is hard to be sure what al-ʿAdil had in mind when he sent his troops there. It may have been an effort to gain paramountcy within the Ayyubids' old Kurdish homeland, but that is only speculation.

In contrast, al-ʿAdil pursued a very cautious policy in regard to the Latins in Palestine.³¹ Far from attempting to finish the job begun by his brother, he took the field only when Christian initiatives compelled him to. He was quite willing to negotiate minor territorial concessions in order to bring things to a prompt conclusion. It is true that he pursued a more active policy against Tripoli and Antioch, but it was intended to restrain them, not to eradicate them. Again we must infer his motives. One surely was the fear of provoking a new crusade like that of 1189–92, which had so nearly ended in disaster. In addition, an aggressive anti-Frankish policy would have undermined his emphasis on administrative consolidation and financial retrenchment. Finally, the ports of Acre and Tyre carried a flourishing commerce in the early thirteenth century. Damascus profited greatly from this commerce, as did Aleppo from the trade through St Simeon and Antioch. War could only have disrupted this useful source of revenues, while producing very uncertain benefits.

Apart from the *jihad* against the Latins, al-ʿAdil and the other Ayyubid princes adhered closely to the ideology which they had inherited from Nur al-Din and Saladin. In particular, they were active patrons of Sunni Islam, and the decades of Ayyubid rule saw an extraordinary profusion of mosques, madrasas, Sufi convents and other religious foundations. It was not merely a question of money and physical infrastructure; the religious and historical scholarship of the Ayyubid period is remarkable both for its quantity and calibre. Damascus may have been the most important centre of Sunni learning in the world in the thirteenth century, and Cairo and Aleppo were not far behind.³²

In the last year of al-ʿAdil's reign, the struggles of a lifetime almost came to naught. The arrival of a new crusade in Acre in 1217 at first seemed just another passing threat to Muslim Palestine, and a crusader thrust through Galilee was fended off by some hard fighting in the autumn and early winter. But in the spring of 1218, the crusade turned toward Egypt and laid siege to the crucial port city of Damietta. The struggle there would continue for more than three years, and more than once threatened the ruin of Ayyubid political power.

It was no doubt a mercy that the aged al-ʿAdil died in August 1218 while leading his forces from Damascus down to the Delta, but his passing left his sons to manage a difficult succession in the midst of a major military crisis.³³

³¹ Sivan (1968), ch. 5; Humphreys (1998).

³² Religious and intellectual life in Damascus: Pouzet, (1988); Chamberlain (1994). Architectural patronage in Damascus: Humphreys (1988) and (1994). Aleppo: Soudel (1949–51); Tabbaa (1997), chs. 5–8.

³³ Al-Kamil (regn. 1218–38): Gottschalk (1958); Humphreys (1977b), chs. 5, 6.

As at the death of Saladin, the empire's key appanages were held by three sons roughly equal in age: al-Kamil Muhammad of Egypt, al-Mu'azzam 'Isa of Damascus, and al-Ashraf Musa in the East. Al-'Adil's successor as head of the confederation, al-Kamil Muhammad, could base his leadership within the family only on the fragile authority of an older brother. Moreover, all three were well into their thirties; they had held their appanages for many years, were experienced in battle and administration, and inevitably regarded their standing vis-à-vis one another with some jealousy. Worse, al-Kamil almost at once faced a military coup mounted by a disgruntled Kurdish amir. The grave situation was further compounded by a Rum Seljuqid attack on Aleppo in the spring of 1218. To the astonishment of contemporary observers, the three brothers maintained an effective alliance throughout the bitter years of the Fifth Crusade. The coup against al-Kamil was quickly suppressed, the Rum Seljuquids were driven off by al-Ashraf, and the crusaders, who had twice refused to accept the retrocession of Jerusalem in exchange for the evacuation of Damietta, had to abandon Egypt in total defeat in September 1221.

It was inevitable that the fraternal harmony of the war years would break down once the crusader armies had left Egypt. The events of the next seventeen years are far too complex to chronicle in detail. In essence they can be divided into four unequal periods: (1) 1221–7, which witnessed an ingeniously conducted struggle by al-Mu'azzam of Damascus to defend his principality (and to expand it where possible) against the ambitions of his brothers al-Kamil and al-Ashraf; (2) 1227–9, which saw both the strange episode of the crusade of Frederick II and the doomed effort by al-Mu'azzam's son and successor al-Nasir Da'ud to maintain his father's policy, an effort defeated by al-Kamil's astuteness in manipulating the ambitions of Frederick and al-Ashraf for his own benefit; (3) 1229–36, a period of restored harmony within the confederation, with a kind of dyarchy between al-Ashraf (now the ruler of Damascus) and al-Kamil (very much the senior partner, since he controlled both Egypt and al-Ashraf's former lands in the East); (4) 1236–8, during which the confederation again fell into a period of open civil war, culminating in al-Kamil's conquest of Damascus in January 1238.

It is tempting to interpret al-Kamil's reign as a long struggle not merely to assert his supremacy within the Ayyubid confederation, but to convert it into a unified monarchy. After 1229, al-Kamil certainly controlled more territory than any other Ayyubid prince since Saladin's division of the empire in 1186. Likewise, the lands he ruled directly – Egypt and the East – allowed him to grip the Syrian principalities (Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo) in a vice. In addition to the strategic location of al-Kamil's lands, they supported some 16,000 regular cavalry, a force almost twice as large as the combined armies of Syria. In the final analysis, however, al-Kamil was a conservative; throughout

his reign he scrupulously respected the confederative structure of the empire. If he was planning a radical reshaping of this structure, he died before he could take any concrete steps toward that goal. In the siege of 1238 he had even promised to restore Damascus to al-Nasir Da'ud, the nephew whom he had dispossessed nine years before. (We cannot of course be sure that he would have kept his promise; al-Kamil was always a man of flexible principles.) Upon his death in Damascus in March 1238, al-Kamil's personal dominions went to his two sons, al-'Adil II in Egypt and al-Salih Ayyub in the East. Damascus was left to the discretion of his amirs; they assigned it to one of his nephews, al-Jawad Yunus, a prince of surpassing obscurity.

In principle, then, the Ayyubid confederation was still intact, along lines not much different from those laid down by Saladin and al-'Adil. In reality, everything had changed. No one was happy with the new settlement. It would break down almost at once, and the internecine wars of the next decade, far bitterer than any that had preceded them in Ayyubid times, would utterly transform the political system created by Saladin. The dissolution of the Ayyubid confederation led finally to the centralized military autocracy of the Mamluk sultanate, but the analysis of these events must be reserved for another chapter.

The century and a half between the death of Malikshah and al-Kamil Muhammad was clearly a period of intense political decentralization in western Iran and the Fertile Crescent. However, only sporadically was it an era of political chaos. What we observe is a competition for autonomy or paramountcy among local rulers and senior amirs who possessed roughly equal resources. That competition was governed by well-understood if rarely articulated rules of politics. Moreover, it was carried out within a rather stable set of fiscal and administrative practices (the *iqta'*, the *mamluk* system, the *atabeg* and so on).

The dynastic succession, passing from Seljuqids to Zengids to Ayyubids, marked no deep changes in these rules or practices. However, each of these dynastic formations did incorporate them in a distinctive way. The Seljuqid legacy left by Tutush in 1095 was so inchoate that his immediate successors were unable to organize effective states, nor could any one of them hope to impose a lasting order on the whole region from Damascus to Mosul. Zengi, schooled in the Great Seljuqid politics of Baghdad, was no doubt more talented and determined than his predecessors. He was also luckier, because there was almost no one to oppose him between Mosul and Aleppo at the beginning of his career, and because he lived long enough to convert his first acquisitions into a solid political structure. He was also fortunate in his successors, particularly his second son Nur al-Din Mahmud, who knew how to extend and strengthen his father's legacy over a long reign. Nur al-Din created an enduring political framework for his successors; in effect he trained the amirs and administrators who would build the Ayyubid empire. Saladin, finally, began his career as a

junior amir at Nur al-Din's court, and clearly acquired an uncommon understanding of the workings of Nur al-Din's political system. What set him apart, excluding his boldness and astonishing good luck in the summer of 1187, was his very conscious political planning, his effort to build a complex confederative structure that could be transmitted from generation to generation. In spite of the lengthy succession crisis of 1193–1201, he succeeded remarkably well. Only half a century after his death did the Ayyubid system of politics begin to disintegrate. This time, however, it was replaced by a new system, based on new administrative institutions and sharply different ways of playing the political game.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AHP</i>	<i>Archivum Historiae Pontificiae</i>
<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
<i>Annales ESC</i>	<i>Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations</i>
<i>ANS</i>	<i>Anglo-Norman Studies</i>
<i>BEC</i>	<i>Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes</i>
<i>BF</i>	<i>Byzantische Forschungen</i>
<i>BHL</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina</i>
<i>BIHR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
<i>BISI</i>	<i>Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo e Archivio Muratoriano</i>
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>BS</i>	<i>Byzantinoslavica</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CCCM</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis</i>
<i>CCM</i>	<i>Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale</i>
<i>COD</i>	<i>Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta</i> , ed. J. Alberigo, J. A. Dossetti <i>et al.</i> , 3rd edn, Bologna (1973)
<i>DA</i>	<i>Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters</i>
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>EEBΣ</i>	<i>Epeteris Etaireias Vizantinon Spoudon</i>
<i>EEMCA</i>	<i>Estudios de Edad Media de la Corona de Aragón</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>FmaSt</i>	<i>Frühmittelalterliche Studien</i>
<i>FSI</i>	<i>Fonti per la Storia d'Italia</i> , ed. Istituto Storico Italiano, 118 vols. so far, Rome (1887–)
<i>HZ</i>	<i>Historische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>

JL	<i>Regesta pontificum Romanorum ab condita ecclesia ad annum post Christum natum MCXCVIII</i> , ed. P. Jaffé, 2nd edn, rev. ed. S. Loewenfeld, F. Kaltenbrunner and P. Ewald, 2 vols., Leipzig (1885–8)
JMH	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
JöB	<i>Jahrbuch des österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
MA	<i>Le Moyen Age</i>
Mansi	<i>Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio</i> , ed. G. D. Mansi, 55 vols., Venice and Florence (1759–98)
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i> , ed. G. H. Pertz et al., Hanover, Weimar, Stuttgart and Cologne (1826–)
Constitutiones	<i>Constitutiones et acta publica imperatorum et regum</i> , 11 vols. so far (1893–)
Diplomata	<i>Diplomata regum et imperatorum Germaniae</i> , 19 vols. so far (1879–)
Epistolae	<i>Die Briefe des deutschen Kaiserzeit</i> , 8 vols. so far (1949–)
Epp. sel.	<i>Epistolae selectae</i> , 5 vols. so far (1916–)
Libelli	<i>Libelli de lite imperatorum et pontificum saeculis XI. et XII. conscripti</i> , 3 vols. (1891–7)
S	<i>Scriptores</i> , 38 vols. so far (1826–)
Schriften	<i>Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i> , 51 vols. so far (1938–)
SRG	<i>Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi</i> , 75 vols. so far (1871–)
SRG NS	<i>Scriptores rerum Germanicarum. Nova series</i> , 18 vols. so far (1922–)
MIÖG	<i>Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung</i>
NA	<i>Neues Archiv</i>
NCMH	<i>The New Cambridge Medieval History</i>
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
PaP	<i>Past and Present</i>
PBA	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina</i> , comp. J. P. Migne, 221 vols., Paris (1844–64)
QFIAB	<i>Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken</i>
RBén	<i>Revue Bénédictine</i>
REB	<i>Revue des Etudes Byzantines</i>
RES-EE	<i>Revue des Etudes Sud-est Européennes</i>

<i>RHC Occ.</i>	<i>Recueil des historiens des croisades. Historiens occidentaux</i> , ed. Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 5 vols., Paris (1844–95)
<i>RHE</i>	<i>Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique</i>
<i>RHGF</i>	<i>Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France</i> , ed. M. Bouquet and M.-J.-J. Brial, 24 vols., Paris (1738–1904)
<i>RIS NS</i>	<i>Rerum Italicarum Scriptores</i> , 2nd edn, ed. G. Carducci <i>et. al.</i> , 34 vols. so far, Città di Castello and Bologna (1900–)
<i>RS</i>	<i>Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores</i> , publ. under the direction of the Master of the Rolls, 99 vols., London (1858–96)
<i>SG</i>	<i>Studi Gregoriani</i>
<i>TM</i>	<i>Travaux et Mémoires</i>
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
<i>VV</i>	<i>Vizantiniskij Vermmenik</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>
<i>ZRG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Rechtsgeschichte</i>
<i>ZRVI</i>	<i>Zbornik Radova Vizantinoloshkog Instituta</i>
<i>ZSSRG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte</i>
<i>KA</i>	<i>Kanonistische Abteilung</i>

Knut the Great, 1019–35
 Harthaknut, 1035–42
 Magnus, 1042–7
 Sven Estridsen, 1047–74
 Harald, 1074–80
 Knut II, 1080–6
 Olaf I, 1086–95
 Erik I, 1095–1103
 Niels, 1104–30
 Magnus, 1134
 Erik II, 1134–7
 Erik III, 1137–46
 Sven III, 1147–57
 Knut III, co-king, 1154–7
 Valdemar I, 1157–82
 Knut IV, 1182–1202

9 *Kings in Norway, 1047–1202*

Harald Hardrada, 1045–66
 Magnus, 1066–9
 Olav, 1069–93
 Magnus Barefoot, 1095–1103
 Eystein, co-king, 1103–23
 Sigurd, co-king, 1103–30
 Olav, co-king, 1103–15
 Harald, 1130–6
 Magnus the Blind, co-king, 1136–9
 Sigurd, co-king, 1136–55
 Inge, co-king, 1142–61
 Eystein, co-king, 1142–57
 Haakon II, 1157–62
 Sigurd, 1162–3
 Magnus, 1161–84
 Sverre, 1184–1202

Muslim rulers (with dates of accession)

10 *The 'Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad, 991–1180*

al-Qadir, 991
 al-Qa'im, 1031

al-Muqtadi, 1075
al-Mustazhir, 1094
al-Mustarshid, 1118
al-Rashid, 1135
al-Muqtafi, 1136
al-Mustanjid, 1160
al-Mustadi', 1170
al-Nasir, 1180

11 The Fatimid caliphs in Cairo, 996–1171

al-Hakim, 996
al-Zahir, 1021
al-Mustansir, 1036
al-Musta'li, 1094
al-Amir, 1101
al-Hafiz, 1131
al-Zafir, 1149
al-Fa'iz, 1154
al-'Adid, 1160–71

12 The Ayyubids (Saladin and his descendants), 1169–1250

In Egypt

al-Nasir I Salah-al-Din (Saladin), 1169
al-'Aziz 'Uthman, 1186
al-Mansur Nasir-al-Din, 1198
al-'Adil I Sayf-al-Din, 1200

In Damascus

al-Afdal Nur-al-Din 'Ali, 1186
al-'Adil I Sayf-al-Din, 1196

In Aleppo

al-'Adil I Sayf-al-Din, 1183
al-Zahir Ghazi, 1186
al-'Aziz Muhammad, 1216

In Diyarbakr

al-Nasir I Salah-al-Din (Saladin), 1185
al-'Adil I Sayf-al-Din, 1195

al-Awhad Najm-al-Din Ayyub, 1200

al-Ashraf I Musa, 1210

In the Yemen

al-Mu‘azzam Shams-al-Din Turan-Shah, 1174

al-‘Aziz Zahir-al-Din Tughtigin, 1181

Mu‘izz-al-Din Isma‘il, 1197

al-Nasir Ayyub, 1202

al-Muzaffar Sulayman, 1214

al-Mas‘ud Salah-al-Din, 1215

13 The Almoravids in North Africa and Spain, 1061–1147

Yusuf b. Tashufin, 1061

‘Ali, 1106

Tashufin, 1142

Ibrahim, 1146

Is‘haq, 1146–7

14 The Almohads in North Africa and Spain, 1130–1214

Muhammad b. Tumart, 1121

‘Abd-al-Mu‘min, 1130

Abu-Ya‘qub Yusuf I, 1163

Abu-Yusuf Ya‘qub al-Mansur, 1184

Muhammad al-Nasir, 1199

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